Becoming a Green Road Warrior: 10 simple tweaks to your mobile technology habits can make a difference to Mother Earth. **PAGE 30**

COMPUTERWORLD®

Inside

MAY 19, 2008
VOL. 42, NO. 21 $5/COPY

News Analysis

HP's acquisition plan creates uncertainties for EDS workers – and users. **PAGE 11**

E-voting backers and critics dig in their heels as the debate over the technology rages on. **PAGE 12**

THE GRILL: The Anti-Defamation League's CIO discusses his role as a change agent and defender of civil liberties. **PAGE 17**

Opinion

When it comes to managing, parenting skills can trump an MBA. **PAGE 19**

Software

Automated programming means CIOs will need a different kind of developer. **PAGE 28**

Don't Miss . . .

A new 'data browser' analyzes info from in-house and Web sources. **PAGE 16**

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Windows Server 2008

BREAKING NEWS AT COMPUTERWORLD.COM

Inside

COMPUTERWORLD ■ MAY 19, 2008

■ NEWS DIGEST

6 IBM expects its **Roadrunner supercomputer** to break the **petaflop barrier**. | The **SEC** moves a step closer to requiring companies to file **financial reports** in the interactive **XBRL** data format.

8 Hackers find the credit and debit **card numbers** of diners on the menu at the **Dave & Buster's** restaurant chain. | **Eli Lilly** turns to TopCoder's **stable of developers** for programming help.

10 Still **wary of coding for Vista**, software developers are sticking with **Windows XP**, a survey finds.

■ NEWS ANALYSIS

11 Uncertain Times Ahead for EDS Workers, Users. Hewlett-Packard's acquisition of EDS may help it compete against IBM. But the deal could mean big changes for EDS employees and customers.

12 Proponents, Critics Give No Ground in Tussle Over E-voting. The debate over the reliability of e-voting systems rages on, with backers pointing to surveys showing that voters are comfortable with the technology and skeptics dismissing the surveys as irrelevant.

■ OPINION

4 Editor's Note: Don Tennant makes some observations about a new survey on the 100 most influential technology vendors.

19 John Halamka shares 10 management lessons he learned from being a parent. No. 1: Yelling never has a positive outcome.

34 Naomi Karten says that try as you might, you can't have change without causing turbulence. But you can manage the messiness.

40 Frankly Speaking: Frank Hayes sees trouble ahead for IT with HP's purchase of EDS. It's not the inevitable layoffs, though; it's the automation of EDS's data center management business.

NATE WILLIAMS

■ FEATURES

22 How to Manage Brilliant People

Every manager wants to oversee ultrasmart employees. In IT, the good – and bad – news is that you're likely to get them. Learn how to deal with the extra-intelligent.

30 Becoming A Green Road Warrior

Here are 10 tips on how to use mobile gear in a way that helps Mother Earth. Among the suggestions: Recharge your laptop with a solar-powered backpack.

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY NATE WILLIAMS

■ DEPARTMENTS

16 On the Mark: Mark Hall reports on the world's first "data browser," specifically designed for analytics.

17 The Grill: Sam Memberg, CIO at the Anti-Defamation League, talks about his postretirement odyssey, life as a change agent and the big picture – in IT and elsewhere.

CRAIG HUEY

28 Future Watch: Automatic for the Programmer. Software isn't in a rut. In fact, its development has been so steady, we've come to expect continual improvement – and therefore fail to appreciate it. Welcome to the "endless value spiral."

32 Security Manager's Journal: You Have to Be Reasonable. Mathias Thurman finds that managing security is a matter of balancing security priorities with business realities.

36 Career Watch: The outlook for IT executive recruiting; plus, mixed signals on employees who smoke.

38 Shark Tank: Think you're up to date on IT industry acronyms? Here's a new one for you: the BOC.

■ ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

Online Chatter	5
Company Index	38

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This Week Online

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Three Rugged Notebooks Take a Beating

Rugged notebooks are designed to stand up to abuse and come back for more. We dropped, drowned and shook three fully ruggedized notebooks to see if they could hold up. Not all survived.

The Getac M230

Your Car – The Ultimate Mobile Computer

You may hate Windows Vista, laugh at the Zune media player and completely ignore Windows Mobile, but Microsoft seems to be making all the right decisions about its Windows product for cars, called Microsoft Auto.

WiMax vs. LTE: Let the Battle Begin

A battle looms over next-generation wireless standards. WiMax has generated a lot of attention, but it could be overwhelmed by another fast wireless technology, Long Term Evolution, which is backed by the nation's two largest wireless carriers, AT&T and Verizon Wireless.

Blog Spotlight

The Best Desktop OS Is . . .

Just because **Stephen J. Vaughan-Nichols** recently talked about Windows XP SP3's virtues and vices, some people think he's turned away from his beloved Linux. Nope – he's still a rock-solid Linux desktop user.

Hiring Hackers: Safety in Numbers?

Just as Frank Abagnale of *Catch Me If You Can* fame left a life of crime to help out the FBI, hackers can sometimes bring their skills to the right side of the law to help catch other thieves. **Angela Gunn** wonders if this is a good idea.

Which 3G Network Is the Best?

All third-generation wireless broadband services are not created equal. We tested the top three, from AT&T, Sprint and Verizon.

Leopard Tamers: Nine Terrific Interface Tweaks

With a host of new tools and add-ons, changing the look and feel of Mac OS X Leopard is easy.

Why We're Hard-wired To Ignore Moore's Law

Even though you may believe in the idea of ever-more-powerful computing, how well do you plan for it – and should you?

SHARK BAIT

The IT Director Can't Do My Job

A good leader is someone willing to do what he orders those under him to do. Except in IT, where one employee's supervisor knows only how to delegate.

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Based on Principled Technologies' SPECjbb2005 performance and power consumption on Dell, HP, and IBM blade servers, December 2007 test report commissioned by Dell.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Don Tennant

Fluidity of Influence

POP QUIZ: What do RedPrairie, FrontRange Solutions, Concur Technologies, Servigistics and Logility have in common?

A. I made them all up.

B. They really exist, but nobody seems to care.

C. They existed at some point in time but have all died an inglorious death.

D. They are among the 100 most influential technology vendors on the planet.

According to a newly released study, the correct answer, entertainingly enough, is D. The study is Aberdeen Group's Annual State of the Market Report, which for the first time includes a list of the 100 most influential technology vendors — software, hardware and service providers — worldwide.

The list was compiled on the basis of a global survey of 4,645 respondents who, Aberdeen said, "were given an 'open-text' opportunity to identify the top three technology companies that had the most influence on their business performance over the course of the past year." Fifty-nine percent of the respondents were from North America, with the rest coming from Europe (21%), the Asia-Pacific region (14%), the Middle East and Africa (4%), and South America and the Caribbean (2%).

To be sure, much of what's in Aberdeen's report parallels our own research and reporting. A prime example is Aberdeen's finding that business intelligence and analytics is the technology area that will have the greatest impact over the next three to five years.

Moreover, the top 10 list is hardly a shocker: Microsoft, Oracle, SAP, IBM, Cisco, HP, Dell, Salesforce.com, EMC and Sun. If you question the fact that Google and BlackBerry-maker RIM aren't in the top 10, you'll probably be appeased to learn that they came in at Nos. 11 and 12, respectively.

Beyond that, though, it's difficult to figure out what on Earth to make of this list. Aberdeen made a surprising discovery: Even though the respondents cited "shortage of talent" as the second-greatest challenge they're confronting this year, Kronos (No. 98) was the only human capital management software vendor to make the list. (The list is available at *http://biz.yahoo.com/iw/080513/0396537.html*.)

■ Why is a huge enterprise software player like CA being eclipsed by a company that's half its size?

But there appear to be more perplexing head-scratchers than that one. Why, for example, is RedPrairie (No. 49) — a $74.5 million supply chain management software vendor in Waukesha, Wis. — more globally influential than BMC (52), Symantec (58) and Hitachi (66)?

Why is FrontRange (70), a $38.6 million CRM provider in Dublin, Calif., having a greater effect on companies' business performance than heavyweights such as Unisys (74), Teradata (91) and Toshiba (93)?

Why is a huge enterprise software player like CA (39) eclipsed by Infor Global Solutions (18), a company in Alpharetta, Ga., that's half its size?

And why are industry stalwarts, from AMD and APC to SGI and Sybase, not even on the list?

Obviously, it's only one survey, and the findings aren't gospel. So rather than trying to offer any meaningful answers, I'll settle for making a couple of general observations.

First, any successful vendor that's into supply chain management or CRM, even if it's a niche player, stood a fairly good chance of making the cut. That says a lot about what the respondents see as having an especially high impact on their companies' business performance.

Second, vendor consolidation is so pervasive that any field of 100 technology suppliers is necessarily going to include some relative no-names. Next year's list is bound to be even more clearly reflective of that trend. It's noteworthy that EDS (No. 36), for one, won't be on it.

Finally, a prediction: The 2009 list will be much more heavily populated by vendors that are identified with cloud computing in general and software as a service in particular. To prepare for next year's quiz, keep a very close eye on Google. It'll be way closer to No. 1 than it will be to No. 11. ■

Don Tennant *is editorial director of* Computerworld *and* InfoWorld. *Contact him at don_tennant@computerworld.com, and visit his blog at* http://blogs.computerworld.com/tennant.

■ ONLINE CHATTER

RESPONSE TO:

IE-Only Marketing Campaign Skewed Firefox, Safari Numbers

May 7, 2008

My grandmother used to say "figures never lie but liars always figure." I bet another check of these figures might show yet another conclusion entirely.

Given the percentage of error, this survey could really show an increase in Firefox and Safari. Since this, like most surveys, was supposed to be a sampling of a cross-section of the populace, it has to allow for a certain margin of error. The only accurate survey is one which asks EVERYONE which browser they use. Then ask which one do they prefer.

■ **Submitted by:** *Steve C*

RESPONSES TO:

The 6 Most Infuriating Tech Sales Styles

May 5, 2008

You forgot the telemarketer that is always calling to talk about toner, LCD cleaning pads, or only wants to ask you a few questions and exclaims they are not selling anything. Although harmless, they can take up a lot of your time. I recommend just saying "No thanks" and getting back to work.

■ **Submitted by:** *Anonymous*

Great article, but you missed several big annoyances:

The name dropper — calls the CEO's office first, and then leaves a voice mail that they have been talking with CEO X's office and were referred to you.

Mr. Phone not e-mail — I often put my e-mail address in my voice mail greeting just to get cold callers to e-mail instead of call. Still, some will leave me a message a day about something I don't care about. If they sent an e-mail, I would surely reply with a polite "not interested," but I'm not willing to invest that much with cold callers.

Too important to make their own calls — How often have you heard: "Mr. So and So will be in your area on the 18th and would like to stop by to discuss this and that?" Mr. Important thinks there's enough value to spend my time by stopping by to pitch the product, but not enough to spend his time qualifying the lead.

■ **Submitted by:** *JV, Michigan*

There's an easy fix for this. You only deal with people you know and people you've built a relationship with. We no longer have to deal with any of this nonsense. If you cannot manage vendor relationships, this article applies to you.

■ **Submitted by:** *Jeffrey Jarzabek*

Don't answer any calls from outside if you don't recognize the number. Who has time to waste on cold-calling sales reps and surveys?

■ **Submitted by:** *Anonymous*

As a person who has been in technology sales quite a while, I've accumulated a large amount of experience with both vendors and buyers:

Buyers don't understand that a sales guy is just trying to earn a living. Yes, some are better than others, some are experienced while others, well, not so much. Vendor management puts a huge amount of pressure on the sales guy to close deals or else risk getting booted. Read the ads for sales guys on, say, Craigslist. You'll see metrics required like making 40, 60, 80 or even 100 calls/e-mails per day in the search of new customers.

On the other hand, vendors often forget that people in companies have work to do, that they are not sitting at their desks twiddling their thumbs just waiting for the next vendor call.

■ **Submitted by:** *Jackson*

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P.O. Box 9171, 1 Speen Street
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News Digest

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THE WEEK AHEAD

MONDAY: EMC World 2008 starts in Las Vegas, and the International DB2 Users Group begins the North American version of its IDUG 2008 conference in Dallas.

TUESDAY: Hewlett-Packard, which agreed to buy EDS last week (see page 11), plans to report its Q2 results. Also, Forrester Research's IT Forum 2008 opens in Las Vegas.

WEDNESDAY: The one-day 2008 MIT Sloan CIO Symposium takes place on the MIT campus in Cambridge, Mass.

HARDWARE

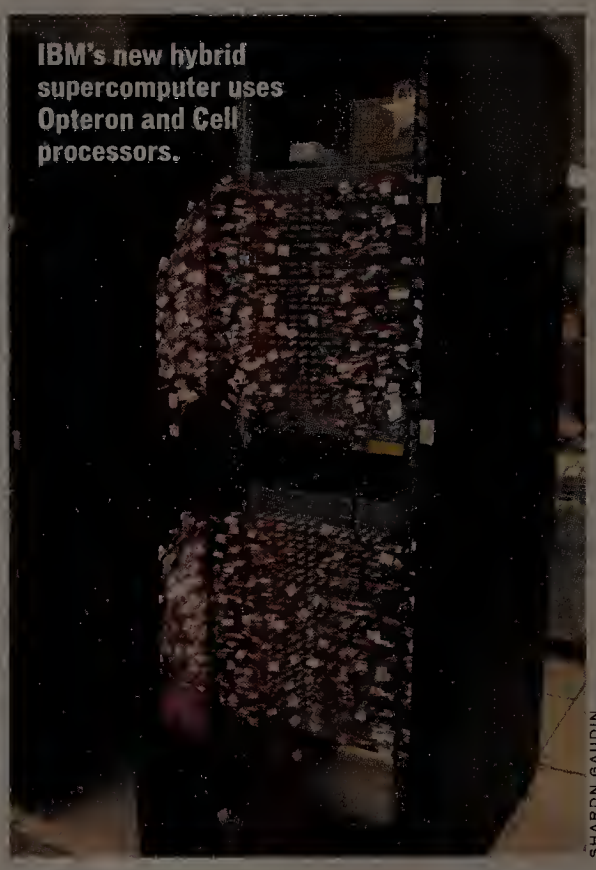
Roadrunner Set to Break The Petaflop Barrier

ENGINEERS AT IBM's Poughkeepsie, N.Y., research facilities are assembling what they claim is the world's most powerful supercomputer — one that is capable of running twice as fast as today's top machine.

The latest version of IBM's Roadrunner is a hybrid machine that runs AMD Opteron processors and Cell chips. The latter technology was jointly designed by IBM, Sony Corp. and Toshiba Corp. for the PlayStation video game console.

The Linux-based machine's builders predicted that it will bust the lofty petaflop speed barrier during tests later this month. "We will break the petascale barrier," said Don Grice, chief engineer on the project. "I don't think there's any technical reason we won't make it."

Grice said the new supercomputer gets its power boost from the Cell chips, which are used for massive calculations. "We had done enough studies to see that it's one of the best computational chips in the world," he said.



IBM's new hybrid supercomputer uses Opteron and Cell processors.

SHARON GAUDIN

IBM built the system under a contract with the U.S. Department of Energy's Los Alamos National Laboratory, where it will be used to test nuclear weapons systems and predict long-term climate changes, said John Morrison, director of the lab's high-performance computing division.

The new supercomputer uses 3.9 megawatts of power, which Grice noted is enough to run 39,000 100-watt light bulbs. It has 6,948 dual-core Opterons on IBM LS21 blades and 12,960 Cell processors on IBM QS22 blades. The machine, with 80TB of memory, has 296 IBM BladeCenter H racks. Roadrunner takes up 6,000 square feet, uses 57 miles of fiber-optic cable and weighs 500,000 pounds.

Once testing is completed, IBM will pack the system onto 21 trucks for transport to New Mexico.

Steve Conway, an analyst at research firm IDC, said he expects more supercomputer makers to design hybrid machines.

"It fits into a much broader trend toward hybrids that goes beyond supercomputing," Conway noted.

If Roadrunner does break the petaflop barrier this month, it will mark the first time that IBM's BlueGene system hasn't held the highest position in the Top500 supercomputer list since November 2004, according to Jack Dongarra, a co-creator of the biannual list and a computer science professor at the University of Tennessee.

BlueGene runs at 478 teraflops, or a trillion floating-point operations per second. A petaflop is 1,000 teraflops.

— Sharon Gaudin

DATA STANDARDS

SEC Moves Ahead on XBRL Plan

The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission last week took a major step toward requiring publicly traded companies to submit their financial reports in an interactive data format.

The SEC voted unanimously to publish for public comment a proposal mandating that companies write all their reports in the Extensible Business Reporting Language, or XBRL. The plan calls for a three-year transition to XBRL, starting in December.

SEC Chairman Christopher Cox said the change will make it easier for firms to post reports and for investors to read them. But the move to XBRL faces opposition from critics who say the benefits may not be worth the cost.

Cox retorted that similar concerns were raised when the SEC began to move financial reports to its Edgar online database in 1985. "Then, as now, the future had its enemies," he said.

– GRANT GROSS, IDG NEWS SERVICE

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IT drives your business. So naturally, it consumes your thoughts. Customers, on the other hand, shouldn't need to think about it at all. They just expect great service. Our approach to Business Service Management helps ensure they get it, by managing IT services based on their impact to your business. That way, with your service commitments fully in sync with your business demands, you'll be able to give your customers that most coveted and elusive of all service experiences: complete satisfaction. Of course, we'll know the source of that satisfaction is really your very own IT department. To learn more, read the Forrester analyst independent report, "The Key To IT Business Alignment Is In Operations (April 2007)" at **ca.com/bsm**.

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SECURITY

Restaurant Chain Served Card Data to Hackers

IN THE third incident of its kind to come to light since March, restaurant chain Dave & Buster's Inc. last week disclosed that credit and debit card numbers were stolen last year from the computer systems at 11 of its locations during the card verification process.

The data thefts took place during a four-month period from May through August 2007, according to a grand jury indictment of three people that was unsealed at U.S. District Court in Central Islip, N.Y.

Two of the alleged perpetrators are residents of Eastern Europe and are being held in Turkey and Germany, respectively, pending extradition proceedings, the U.S. Department of Justice said. The third lives in Miami and was arrested this month by the U.S Secret Service.

In a statement, Dallas-based Dave & Buster's said the alleged thieves stole Track 2 data from the magnetic stripes on credit and debit cards, including card numbers and expiration dates, while the information was being transmitted to authorize transactions.

Dave & Buster's said it "was alerted to" the intrusion late last August and "immediately" notified the Secret Service. The chain added that it gave credit card companies lists of affected cardholders last September. But the thefts weren't publicly disclosed until after the grand jury indictment was unsealed.

Neither Dave & Buster's nor the DOJ disclosed how many card numbers were stolen. The DOJ said only that at one restaurant alone, about 5,000 card numbers were taken and then used in fraudulent transactions worth more than $600,000.

The indictment said that the two alleged Eastern European hackers gained remote access to point-of-sale servers at the 11 restaurants — apparently by falsely claiming to be authorized users. They then allegedly installed packet-sniffing software that captured card data as it was being sent to a central system for transmission to a payment processing firm.

Dave & Buster's said that after the data thefts were discovered, it implemented unspecified new security measures in an effort to prevent repeat incidents.

The breach disclosure follows similar reports of data-in-transit thefts in March by Hannaford Bros. Co. and Okemo Mountain Resort. Hannaford said that up to 4.2 million card numbers were stolen by a packet-sniffing tool planted on servers at nearly 300 grocery stores. And Okemo reported that data was taken as payment cards were being swiped at the Ludlow, Vt., ski area.

— Jaikumar Vijayan

Short Takes

Yahoo Inc. late last week criticized investor Carl Icahn's bid to control its board and force it back to the bargaining table with **Microsoft Corp.** Icahn wants the online company to resume negotiations with Microsoft, whose $47.5 billion buyout bid was rejected.

Advanced Micro Devices Inc. announced that Mario Rivas is leaving his post as head of its Computing Solutions Group "to pursue new opportunities." He was replaced by Randy Allen, who had been general manager of AMD's server and workstation business.

Oracle Corp. plans to buy **AdminServer Inc.**, a maker of policy administration software for the insurance industry. Terms weren't disclosed. AdminServer will become part of a new Oracle business unit headed by former AdminServer CEO Rick Connors.

Oklahoma State University last week began notifying about 70,000 individuals that their names, addresses and Social Security numbers may have been compromised by a hack into a university parking and transit department server.

DEVELOPMENT

Eli Lilly Taps 'Rock Star' Coders for IT Projects

Eli Lilly and Co. last week signed an agreement to use TopCoder Inc.'s stable of freelance developers to help build applications for its global drug-discovery operations.

TopCoder sponsors software development contests that attract so-called rock star programmers to compete for cash and other prizes. It then hires the top programmers to build software components for its corporate clients.

"[TopCoder] offers a unique business model for us to collaborate with," said Everett Lee, manager of discovery research IT at Lilly. "A lot of the things we are going after are big and bold ventures that any IT organization couldn't do by itself."

> **"We don't have to own every piece of the puzzle. We can leverage the expertise just for the pieces we need.**
>
> **EVERETT LEE,** MANAGER OF DISCOVERY RESEARCH IT, ELI LILLY AND CO.

Lilly will use TopCoder's talent first to enhance its process for requesting and distributing chemical samples for testing.

Lee said TopCoder's developers will make Lilly "more effective and efficient in delivering our solutions. We don't have to own every piece of the puzzle. We can leverage the expertise just for the pieces we need."

Carey Schwaber, an analyst at Forrester Research Inc., said the use of companies like TopCoder for development projects could prove to be a problem for outsourcers.

"It demonstrates a level of dissatisfaction with outsourcing," she noted.

– HEATHER HAVENSTEIN

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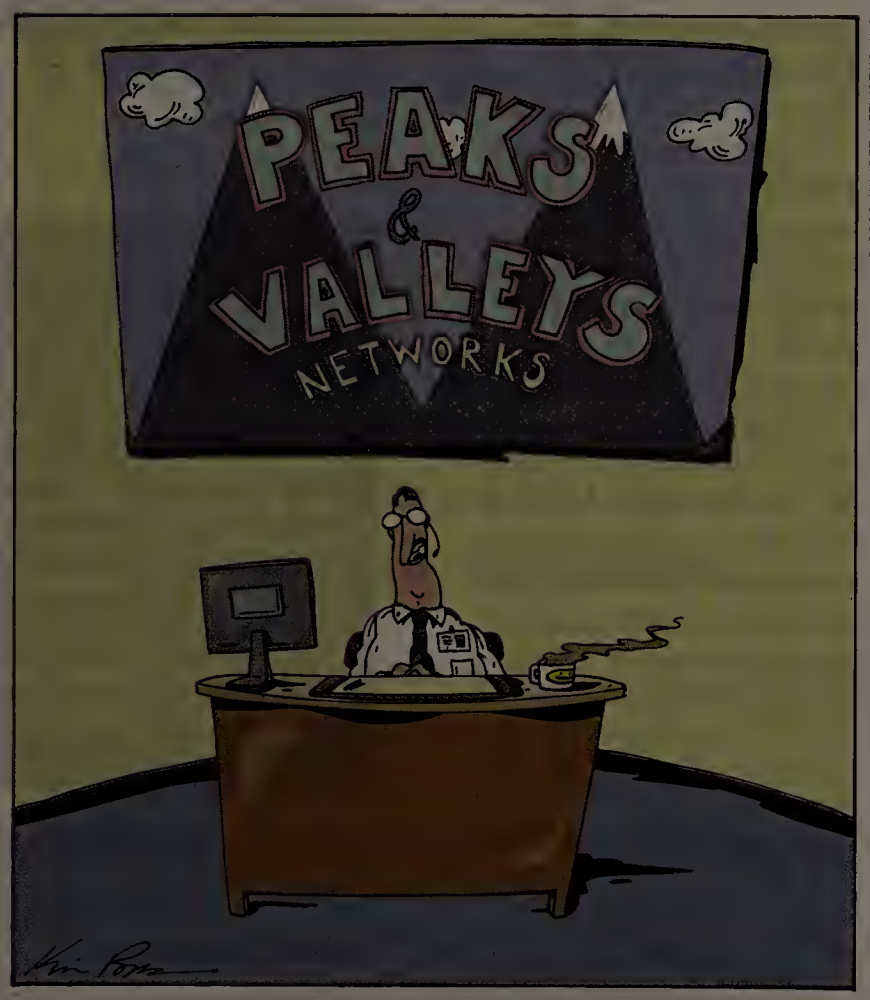

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OPERATING SYSTEMS

Most Developers Still Choosing XP Over Vista

SOME 18 months after its launch, Microsoft Corp.'s Windows Vista remains ignored by most North American corporate and commercial software developers, according to a survey released last week by Evans Data Corp.

> **"Large enterprises don't transition overnight to the newest platforms. To me, the adoption pace seems pretty normal.**
>
> **SHANNON BRAUN,** INDEPENDENT CONSULTANT

In the survey of 380 developers, just 8% said that they're writing applications targeting the Vista operating system, while about half said they're targeting its predecessor, Windows XP.

About one in four developers surveyed said they plan to write Vista applications in 2009.

John Andrews, president and CEO of Evans Data, said that some well-publicized problems with Vista caused many corporate and commercial developers to take a "wait and see" approach toward it. "Most people in the corporate enterprise and commercial world are staying with XP," he said.

"None of our customers are saying, 'We need those WPF controls now,' " said Julian Bucknall, referring to Vista's Windows Presentation Foundation. "We find most are still sticking with ASP.Net and Windows Forms applications," added Bucknall, who is chief technology officer at Developer Express Inc., a maker of Windows tools.

Some developers noted that new operating systems are traditionally slow to penetrate corporate sites.

"Large enterprises don't transition overnight to the newest platforms," said Shannon Braun, a programming consultant in Minneapolis. "To me, the adoption pace seems pretty normal."

"Vista is too bleeding-edge — not for us, but for our clients," added Michael Krasowski, a vice president at PDSA Inc., a Tustin Calif.-based maker of Windows development tools. "They're all leery of Vista."

— Heather Havenstein and Eric Lai

BETWEEN THE LINES *By John Klossner*

Computer Sciences Corp. agreed to pay $1.37 million to settle charges that it took part in a scheme in which dozens of vendors paid one another kickbacks in return for roles in federal IT contracts.

EarthLink Inc. said it will shut down its municipal Wi-Fi network in Philadelphia on June 12, continuing its pullout from that market.

20 YEARS AGO IBM, Digital Equipment Corp., Hewlett-Packard Co. and four other vendors formed the Open Software Foundation to counter a Unix alliance between AT&T Corp. and Sun Microsystems Inc.

Global Dispatches

Lloyds TSB to Cut 450 U.K. IT Jobs

LONDON – Lloyds TSB Group PLC last week announced plans to cut 450 IT jobs as it moves more positions to India.

The financial services firm said it expects to cut 250 internal software designers and developers and 200 contractors over a 12-month period starting next month.

Lloyds TSB said it would offer jobs elsewhere in the company to permanent staffers affected by the move. It is also providing each one with a £2,000 ($3,900 U.S.) training bond to help them learn new skills.

A U.K. labor group called Unite the Union said the move showed that Lloyds TSB has "a lack of faith in the IT skills of their U.K. workforce."

Leo King,
Computerworld U.K.

Chileans' Personal Data Posted Online

SANTIAGO, Chile – A hacker this month posted personal data on some 6 million residents of Chile on a Chilean technology blog called Fayerwayer.com.

The hacker, who calls himself "Anonymous Coward," posted three compressed files that included people's names, addresses, telephone numbers and taxpayer identification numbers, said Leo Prieto, Fayerwayer.com's director.

A site editor spotted the data shortly after its posting on May 3 and immediately removed the files and contacted Chilean police, Prieto said.

After its removal from Fayerwayer.com, the data was periodically posted on other sites, Prieto said.

In a note, the hacker said the files were posted to draw attention to Chile's poor data-protection measures.

Robert McMillan,
IDG News Service

BRIEFLY NOTED

The European Commission has received a new complaint that Microsoft Corp. is impeding the ability to exchange data between Office 2007 and rival products. But the EC said it isn't treating the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency's filing as a formal complaint.

Paul Meller,
IDG News Service

Uncertain Times Ahead For EDS Workers, Users

Hewlett-Packard's plan to buy EDS may help it compete against IBM for IT services business. But can HP take over without sending everyone to the exits?

By Patrick Thibodeau

IN ACQUIRING Electronic Data Systems Corp. in a $13.9 billion deal announced last week, Hewlett-Packard Co. is getting a company that runs the core IT systems at many large corporations and government agencies. The EDS employees working inside those organizations often have critical roles and are treated as part of the corporate family.

For instance, EDS isn't just a vendor to the municipal government of Anaheim, Calif. "They are our data processing department," said Tom Wood, Anaheim's chief operating officer, referring to the EDS workers assigned to the city. The people from EDS "act like city employees, frankly, in every respect," Wood added.

But things could change for EDS staffers and customers alike after HP completes its purchase of the IT services and outsourcing vendor, an event expected to occur in the second half of the year. Mark Hurd, HP's chairman, CEO and president, has shown no qualms about cutting jobs in the past, and he views increased IT automation as the key to reducing data center costs.

HP is consolidating its own IT operations from an earlier total of 85 far-flung data centers into six facilities with increased remote management capabilities. The consolidation work is scheduled to be finished later this year, and HP is using the project as a showcase for setting up lights-out data centers. CIO Randall Mott has said that he expects the ratio of servers to systems administrators to exceed 200:1 at HP's new facilities.

In comparison, EDS is a much more people-intensive organization. Its annual revenue is only about one-fifth of HP's: $22 billion last year vs. HP's $104 billion in its 2007 fiscal year. But EDS has a workforce of 137,000 people — not that much smaller than HP's 172,000-person payroll.

What's ahead for many of those EDS workers is uncertain. CEO Ronald Rittenmeyer, who is scheduled to head a new EDS business unit within HP, said during a press briefing last week that EDS is continuing to "streamline" its workforce.

He didn't explain what he meant by that, but one thing EDS is doing is shifting work — and jobs — to lower-cost countries such as India and China. It now has about 45,000 workers in such locations, according to Rittenmeyer. That nearly matches the company's U.S. workforce of 47,000 people.

Rittenmeyer also acknowledged that efforts to further automate IT operations may play a role in workforce decisions after the merger is completed.

"We're going to continue to look at automation, and we're going to continue to look at quality," Rittenmeyer said. He added that increased automation of IT "is just part of the natural evolution, so there are always job adjustments."

Wood and several other EDS customers saw positive elements to the deal because of HP's technology breadth.

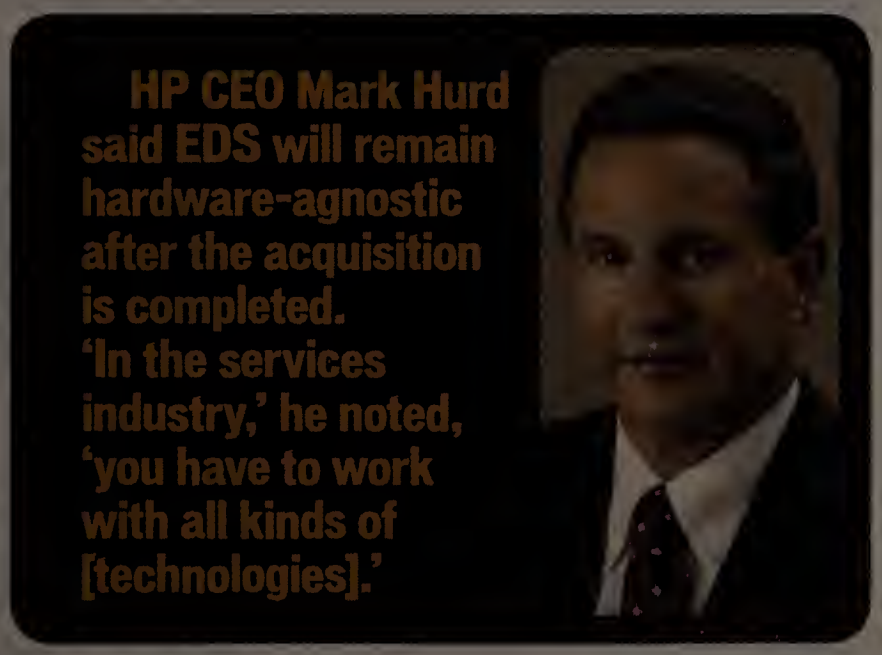
"I would be more worried if they were merging with a lesser-known commodity than HP," said Rick Morris, CIO at Dollar Thrifty Automotive Group Inc. EDS is managing the Tulsa, Okla.-based car rental company's application development, networks and hardware under a five-year contract.

The consensus among industry analysts is that HP is buying EDS to position itself better against IBM in the services market. According to Gartner Inc., IBM had services revenue of about $54 billion last year — putting it well ahead even of the combined total of $39 billion for EDS and HP.

IBM also has a strong "attach" rate, or track record of bundling services with its hardware sales. Buying EDS will give HP access to a lot of data centers, which in turn could provide HP with opportunities to reconfigure facilities with its own systems and do away with rival products.

But Hurd vowed during last week's press briefing that EDS will remain hardware-agnostic. "In the services industry, you have to work with all kinds of [technologies]," he said. ■

Material from the IDG News Service was used in this story.



HP CEO Mark Hurd said EDS will remain hardware-agnostic after the acquisition is completed. 'In the services industry,' he noted, 'you have to work with all kinds of [technologies].'

Proponents, Critics Give No Ground in Tussle Over E-voting

The touch-screen debate rages on, with backers touting new voter surveys and foes dismissing them. By Todd R. Weiss

IT HAS BEEN almost eight years since hanging and pregnant chads on voting punch cards in Florida left the result of the 2000 presidential election in dispute for weeks, until the Supreme Court decided the outcome in a controversial 5-4 vote.

Now most Americans can use touch-screen or optical scan voting systems to cast their ballots. But the growth of electronic voting doesn't mean that disputes over vote counts are a thing of the past. In fact, a stalemate akin to the Obama-Clinton battle for this year's Democratic presidential nomination has developed around e-voting, with proponents and critics holding fast to their rival positions on the reliability of the systems.

Skeptics continue to argue that touch-screen machines can miscount votes and are vulnerable to hacking, while e-voting vendors and other backers of the technology say they are accurate and secure.

Caught in the middle of the crossfire are the voters who actually use the devices. Last summer, Debra Bowen, California's secretary of state, proclaimed that citizens there "don't have faith in the integrity" of e-voting systems. But a pair of studies released in March — one by think tank The Brookings Institution and the other by IT consultancy InfoSentry Services Inc. — contend that a majority of voters are comfortable with touch-screen machines.

The academic researchers who conducted the Brookings study, which was based on voting tests involving 1,536 people in three states, said they "were impressed with how favorably" the participants rated the six touch-screen systems that were tested, from a usability standpoint. Average user-satisfaction scores on the systems ranged from 4.7 to 5.92, on a scale of 1 to 7, the researchers said.

InfoSentry, whose clients include various election boards and secretaries of state, has conducted an annual survey of attitudes toward voting technologies since 2004. According to the firm, 67% of the 1,000 voters it polled in January said they had a positive view of the trustworthiness of touch-screen systems. Meanwhile, 16% had a negative view, and the remaining 17% were neutral. Those figures are almost identical to the ones from the initial survey four years ago.

Those findings jibe with the experiences of Gary Bartlett, executive director

Continued on page 14

"The routine voter has not expressed any dissatisfaction with or distrust of any type of e-voting equipment."
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

"The perceptions that people have are important, but [they're] not necessarily accurate."
COMPUTER SCIENCE PROFESSOR, JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

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Continued from page 12

of the North Carolina State Board of Elections.

"The routine voter has not expressed any dissatisfaction with or distrust of any type of e-voting equipment," Bartlett said. He added that he hears negative feedback only from activists who are critical of e-voting.

North Carolina officials conduct postelection audits to verify the vote tallies of touch-screen and optical scanning machines. Thus far, the problems that affected election results have all been caused by "human error," Bartlett said.

Paul Herrnson, director of the Center for American Politics and Citizenship at the University of Maryland and lead author of the Brookings study, dismissed e-voting critics as "a small group of political activists" who are pushing "conspiracy theories" about the technology. "You can't convince these people, but the general public is different," he said.

FACTS VS. PERCEPTIONS

Critics, though, are equally dismissive of the Brookings and InfoSentry studies, contending that they only examined people's beliefs and feelings — not the hard facts of whether touch-screen systems can count votes correctly and securely.

"The perceptions that people have are important, but [they're] not necessarily accurate," said Avi Rubin, a computer science professor at Johns Hopkins University.

The main problem with e-voting systems, according to Rubin and others, is that people have no way to know for sure if their votes are being counted properly.

On the other side of the debate, e-voting vendors and other proponents say that no election results have had to be reversed because of tabulation errors or fraud. They also maintain that problems with the systems are most often caused by poorly trained poll workers, not technical issues.

David Dill, a board member at watchdog group VerifiedVoting.org, conceded the point about there being no evidence of e-voting fraud. "But I really think that's irrelevant," he said. "*Trustworthy* means that a system is verifiable." And that isn't the case with e-voting systems, Dill and other critics claim.

Some election officials are among the people raising questions about the reliability of e-voting machines.

Last summer, for example, Bowen imposed new security standards on California's e-voting systems and curtailed their use after an independent review found a variety of problems. Among them: Researchers were able to overwrite firmware, bypass system locks and exploit bugs in Windows that let them circumvent audit logs and directly access data on some voting machines.

And in March, a group of county clerks in New Jersey asked both the state's attorney general and Princeton University computer science professor Edward Felten — a prominent e-voting critic — to investigate small vote-count discrepancies found in about 60 e-voting systems during the state's primary election on Feb. 5.

Sequoia Voting Systems Inc., the maker of the machines, blamed the discrepancies on poll-worker errors and threatened legal action if Felten went ahead with his review. But a New Jersey judge ruled April 25 that a separate review requested by private plaintiffs could proceed, with restrictions designed to protect Sequoia's trade secrets.

Even the Brookings study found error rates of up to 3% in its tests of e-voting systems — and that was in a relatively simple mock presidential vote.

A 3% error rate could change the outcome of an election, Herrnson acknowledged. But he said the errors were caused by poorly designed ballots that left voters "unable to translate their choices into reality" — not by system snafus.

Lillie Coney, an e-voting coordinator at the Electronic Privacy Information Center, compared e-voting critics such as herself to the consumer advocates who pushed for better automobile safety standards in the 1960s. Most consumers weren't demanding safer vehicles back then, but they have come to expect them now, Coney said.

But David Beirne, executive director of the Election Technology Council, an e-voting trade group, claimed that many of the technology's critics "are only focusing on the perceptions" of problems.

There's a long way to go to find common ground. ■ **Grant Gross** *and* **Robert McMillan** *of the IDG News Service contributed to this story.*

Pa. Voters Weigh In On Voting Systems

So, what do some actual voters think about e-voting systems? In a random and unscientific sampling, conducted a week after Pennsylvania's April 22 presidential primary, *Computerworld* asked 20 voters at a bookstore in Lancaster, Pa., for their opinions about the touch-screen machines used in their communities.

Thirteen said they trust the systems and aren't worried that their votes will be counted improperly. "I have no concern with that," said Joshua Klein, a 28-year-old Lancaster resident. "It's adding one and one and one and one. I feel [the systems] can do that."

Fred Beyer, a 56-year-old doctor from Lancaster, said he not only trusts touch-screen machines but favors the adoption of online voting in Pennsylvania. "They want me to write my prescriptions online," he noted. "If I can call in drugs online, then I can certainly vote online [securely]."

Another voter said he thinks that e-voting systems are "pretty fail-safe," while yet another said, "I put my faith in the programmers."

But six of the voters who were polled said they prefer optically scanned paper ballots in order to be sure that their choices are accurately recorded. The remaining voter said she wasn't sure whether e-voting systems are trustworthy.

E-voting systems could be used to manipulate election results, said Paul Tubiana, 33, of Bethlehem, Pa. Tubiana added that he thinks e-voting vendors should release their source code for public scrutiny. "It should be open and available to look for bugs and flaws," he said, "because we just don't know."

– TODD R. WEISS

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The Society for Information Management, *Computerworld* and *InfoWorld* proudly honor this year's recipient of the "Best Practices in Innovation" Award:

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The Tri-State CIO Forum, the leading event for CIOs to network with the best executives in the business, is produced by *Computerworld*, *InfoWorld* and the Society for Information Management (SIM) chapters in New Jersey, New York Metro and Fairfield/Westchester. It's where you'll hear top CIOs talk about today's burning issues. Whether your priorities are to pioneer innovative business opportunities, lead your company with green IT initiatives, or create a contemporary culture that rewards business-savvy IT thinking, the Tri-State CIO Forum will help.

On the Mark

HOT TRENDS ■ NEW PRODUCT NEWS ■ INDUSTRY BUZZ BY MARK HALL

MATTHEW FAULKNER

A Browser for Analytics

YOU COULD say that data is a family obsession at Kirix Corp. Founded in Elmhurst, Ill., in 2001 by the four Williams brothers (Aaron, Ben, David and Nate) and a friend, the company has created a new browser specifically to analyze data on your network as well as structured information you find on the Internet.

Williams (that'd be Nate, the president) says that with the advent of software as a service, users need tools designed for Web-resident data. Hence, the release last month of Kirix Strata, which he calls the world's first "data browser."

Strata is the world's first "data browser," Nate Williams claims.

According to Williams, data analytics tools have typically been available to only a few people inside a company because they require a lot of IT resources. But, he says, Strata is so easy, "your desktop becomes your personal data playground."

Based on the open-source Gecko browser engine from Mozilla, Strata is designed for people who need to create ad hoc reports from myriad data sources. It has its own scripting language so you can write a script that, say, monitors a Web site for changes to your data. Kirix also produces packaged scripts, or extensions. For example, by September, it will offer one that encrypts data going in and out of Strata.

Currently available for Windows and Linux users (a Mac version is ready but not yet shipping), Strata sells for $249 per seat.

Get Ready for Section 6.6

The next security compliance deadline looms at the end of June. The Section 6.6 provision of the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard, referred to as PCI, requires application firewall protection for any online retailer that accepts credit cards.

Ken Schwartzreich, CEO of P2 Security LLC in New York, hopes you'll consider his company's maXecurity Web access management appliance to help you comply with Section 6.6. He brags that the appliance not only inspects IP packets and authenticates users to an application, but also has four layers of admin control for separation-of-duty requirements.

According to Chief Technology Officer Jeff Gresham, maXecurity comes standard with loads of reports, such as one on access violations. He likes the entitlement report, which shows what access rights individuals have and, conversely, who has access to each app. Prices start at $25,000.

Java, Ruby and SaaS

When corporate IT builds an app, who says it will run in your data center? Certainly not David Abramowski, CEO of Morph Labs Inc. in Cebu City, Philippines. His company has announced a beta program to let IT (or an ISV) deploy Java-based apps in Morph Labs' California data center in a SaaS model.

Abramowski: Use SaaS for corporate-built apps.

Morph Labs doesn't just host your app. You hand over your bits, and its tech staff does everything else — from creating database tables to backing up your data on a daily basis. The company has designed specific Web app infrastructure to guarantee uptime and performance.

If that sounds like Google's App Engine program, Abramowski notes one big difference. Google uses proprietary technology, such as its own APIs and data store, he says, to "lock in developers." In contrast, Morph Labs depends on open-source tools, such as Postgres and, as of next month, MySQL databases, the Jetty Web server, the Mongrel app server and other freely available software.

The Java app service leaves beta in June. Full-blown SaaS deployments start at $1 per day. (Yes, that's one buck.) ■

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CRAIG HUEY

■ THE GRILL

Sam Memberg

The **Anti-Defamation League's CIO** talks about his **postretirement odyssey, life as a change agent** and **the big picture** — in IT and elsewhere.

Dossier

Name: Sam Memberg

Title: CIO

Organization: Anti-Defamation League

Location: New York

Most interesting thing people don't know about him: "I'm a *neat* cook."

Favorite technology: Telekinesis

Favorite nonwork pastime: "Wandering around the city with my wife."

Favorite vice: "Legal?"

Philosophy in a nutshell: "Filbert existentialism – or Almond Joy."

All time favorite movies: *The Devil's Advocate* and *Bambi*

How did you come into your role at the Anti-Defamation League? I retired as CIO of the New York Public Library more than 10 years ago. I thought, "That's it! I don't have to work anymore — I'm a happy guy." I spent almost a year playing racquetball every day. I swam, I cooked. My wife and I fight about who cooks. I'm good; she's a little better. I was in great shape.

And then one day she says to me, "You're not as happy as you think you are." So at that time, we had been married, geez, more than 30 years, and I said, "Well, maybe she knows something." I thought about it and realized she might be right.

Since I had retired, people [had] kept calling me [to offer IT executive roles], and I kept saying, "No. I'm retired."

And then I thought about it, and I talked to someone who had been calling me from U.S. UNICEF. I had this vision of working in my underwear one day a week from home. But I wound up working there full time. In all humility, I fixed their problems.

At about that time, the Anti-Defamation League called me. I was talking to [executives] and realized that the issues they had were not as technical as they thought. It was really more cultural; it was organizational. I said, "If you're really willing to try to

“The less you realize you’re dealing with technology, the better off you are.

address the underlying organizational issues, then I’m interested.” And I got carte blanche assurances from the CEO, the chairman of the board, the CFO and the COO. That’s not a bad place to be. That’s how I wound up at the Anti-Defamation League.

I promised them three [years], and it’s been five. Right now, I have projects in front of the board that will require two to three years of work. They’re willing to fund some of them on the contingent basis that I stay. [*Laughs*]. So I must be doing something right.

What are some of the not-so-obvious ways that you apply IT to try to support ADL’s mission? I spend less than half my time on traditional IT work. I’m truly part of the management team. We have division directors of each functional unit, and I’m one of them.

In addition to that, I chair the internal operations task force. We talk of not just day-to-day stuff but actually longer-term issues: strategic planning, operational issues that span the organization. [I’m] given an opportunity to help deal with the issues — it’s anti-Semitism, it’s discrimination, it’s hate crimes, it’s a wide range of activities that ADL has been involved with.

I was always interested in civil rights. And the fact that ADL is so involved in broad-spectrum civil rights activities and not just focused solely on anti-Semitism, I think that’s what attracted me to it.

I can begin to see the results of my efforts, and it’s great. The basic stuff works, which is how I established credibility. And then I made myself an instigator, if you will. I came in as CIO and chief agent of change, as a subtitle. And that part of it has been intriguing to me.

We’re seeing so much more of that now, with CIOs taking on additional roles outside the traditional forum, including other CXO-type of roles. It’s an amazing thing.

The services and functions that technology brings and supports have become an integral part of an operation today. It’s everywhere you go. It’s like electricity. You don’t know it’s there; you don’t care about it. IT’s goal, at least from my perspective, is to become that invisible. The less you realize you’re dealing with technology, the better off you are.

The flip side of that is to teach people what technology can do for them. It’s not that they’re hidebound. It’s just that some people just don’t take the next step. They come to one of my folks and say, “I want a list of this.” When you probe and you make them think, what they really want is a database that will give them all of these subsets of information, all this ability to manipulate data. And they don’t know that until you start asking, “But three years from now, wouldn’t you like that?” Well, in order to do that, we have to build an architectural substrate that will support it. That’s where the fun comes in. In working with my folks — who sometimes also have a little narrow [view] of their jobs — to tease away the need to think broadly, to question the client departments and divisions about what it is they really want. That’s what I like. That’s always been something I’ve been interested in: the bigger picture.

I guess I’ve made a lot of my mark by being a translator. I try not to talk in acronyms. I’ve always said that if I can’t tell an intelligent layperson what I’m doing, then I don’t know what I’m talking about.

Do you have to take any unique approaches to try to protect the data in your organization? Without going into details, we take extraordinary steps to protect both our Web data and our internal data. We have ways of accessing data over the Web that I’m not going to acknowledge, but don’t necessarily pay someone who’s part of ADL to do it.

What’s the size of your IT staff? About 20. We have a professional help desk that’s Web front-ended. Tickets come in, we can take a look and we can spot [security] trends. We can spot people who are trying to [cause damage]. We’re predictive. We make efforts to derail those efforts. Sometimes it’s technical; sometimes it involves law enforcement. It’s an interesting mix.

Do you tend to recruit Jewish IT professionals who may have a passion for ADL’s mission? It’s just the opposite. Religion is not an issue when we hire people in IT. However, when we hire people, it’s my duty to tell people, “This is what the organization does. Understand it. We’re hiring you for your skill sets and everything else. But we also want you to know what the organization is. And if you don’t know enough about what we do and why we do it, it’s a learning process that I take pride in conducting.”

— *Interview by* **Thomas Hoffman**

MORE ONLINE
See Sam Memberg
For an expanded video version of this interview, please see **computerworld.com/more**

■ OPINION

John D. Halamka

Leadership Lessons From My Daughter

BEING A PARENT has taught me more about leadership than anything written by Spencer Johnson or Peter Drucker. Here are my top 10 management lessons learned from being the father of 15-year-old Lara:

1. Yelling never has a positive outcome. My daughter remembers the two times I've raised my voice, even though they occurred long ago. My outbursts diminished me and had no positive effect on her behavior.

In business, if I ever feel that raising my voice will win the battle, my life as a parent tells me that confrontation only makes a situation worse.

2. Formal authority rarely works. I wouldn't get very far if I told Lara, "Do this because I'm your father." That wouldn't get me very far as a CIO, either. Leadership comes from thoughtful discussion that leads to consensus.

3. Give permission to make mistakes. Making mistakes is the way children learn, and it works for our staffs, too. Setting limits and offering staffers the flexibility to excel on their own is far more effective than micromanagement.

4. Communication is key. Teenagers don't perceive parents as cool, smart or fun to be with. But you still have to keep the lines of communication open. It's less important to win an argument than it is to ensure you're still speaking when the discussion is over. The same is true with customers and employees — I'd rather hear bad news and fix the problem than not hear anything at all.

5. Get the basics right. I've tried to be a living example that the nice guy can finish first, theft and aggressive behavior are wrong, and kindness and consensus win the day. I believe that such a basic moral framework will lead Lara to make the right choices on tough decisions. In business, setting a tone of ethical, fair and collaborative behavior spreads to staff and customers.

6. You can criticize ideas, but not people. If my daughter makes a decision I do not agree with, we can debate her ideas but not her abilities. The same is true with employees and customers. I treat everyone with respect, even if I do not agree with their ideas.

■ Parenting can be more valuable than an MBA.

7. Foster the joy of success rather than the fear of failure. When I took the SATs, I had no real knowledge of their importance. I got a scholarship, not because I was smarter than my peers, but because the fear of failure didn't hang over the exam. With Lara, we've tried to celebrate success. This approach seems much more sustainable than instilling the fear of failure. Organizations that emphasize growth and achievement will perform better than those that manage through intimidation.

8. Delegate responsibility, but emphasize accountability. We let our daughter set her schedule, but when the alarm sounds in the morning, she is accountable for her decision to go to bed late. By not enforcing a bedtime, we have enhanced her decision-making. Similarly, the more responsibility you give your staff, the greater their accountability.

9. Respect innovation. Last year, when we picked a bucket of carrots from our garden, I recommended that we follow the standard practice of using a sieve to wash them. Lara had a different idea: laying them out in the driveway and washing them with a sprayer. Her method was fast, effective and efficient. Even though business as usual has always worked, there may be better ways.

10. Accept independence. If I make decisions for Lara, she'll be less prepared for life. I give her the best guidance that I can, hope that she develops a strong internal compass, and then let her change as she experiences the world. Developing the next generation of leaders requires the same approach.

Parenting can be more valuable than an MBA. It teaches humility, selflessness and self-control. And no matter what I do in IT, my daughter will be my greatest legacy. ■

John D. Halamka *is CIO at CareGroup Healthcare System, CIO and associate dean for educational technology at Harvard Medical School, chairman of the New England Health Electronic Data Interchange Network, chair of the national Healthcare Information Technology Standards Panel and a practicing emergency physician. You can contact him at jhalamka@caregroup.harvard.edu.*

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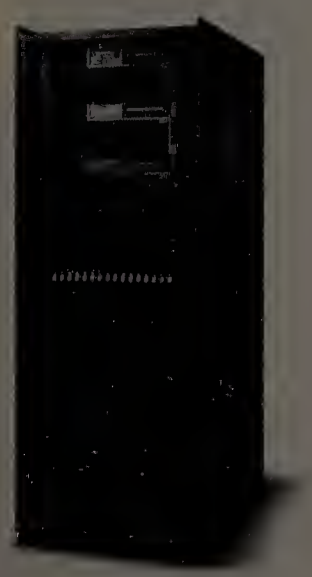
_INFRASTRUCTURE LOG

_DAY 85: Woke up in a desert. Our data center is overheating so badly it's playing tricks on our minds. We have to do something about these energy costs. But how? Our processing needs keep growing.

_Maybe that sphinx over there has an answer.

_DAY 86: I'm taking back control with IBM. Their services can help us diagnose inefficiencies and build a more energy-efficient data center. A virtualized IT environment can improve our server and storage utilization while their power management capabilities help us actively manage our power usage.[1] And thanks to IBM's advanced cooling solutions, our data center is cucumber cool.

_Good thing. My wrinkle-free shirts really aren't very breathable.



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NATE WILLIAMS

Manage Brilliant PEOPLE

Every manager wants an ultra-smart staff. In IT, the good and bad news is that you're likely to get one.

BY MARY BRANDEL

IT'S A management axiom that the smarter the employees are, the harder they are to manage. Employees with a high degree of left-brain intelligence, which is common among IT professionals, can be demanding, blind to the opinions of others, easily bored and bent on being "right," according to the people who manage them.

"Highly intelligent, highly technical people inhabit a subculture where knowledge is social status and power, and correctness is key," says Clinton Nixon, a senior developer at Viget Labs LLC, a Web design, development and consulting firm in Falls Church, Va. This can lead to disgruntlement when inevitable disagreements occur, particularly between employee and boss.

So, while you may dream of supervising a brilliant staff, be careful what you wish for — or at least learn the best way to manage ultrasmart people. Here are six tips from those in the know.

DO MANAGE RESULTS, NOT PROCESS.

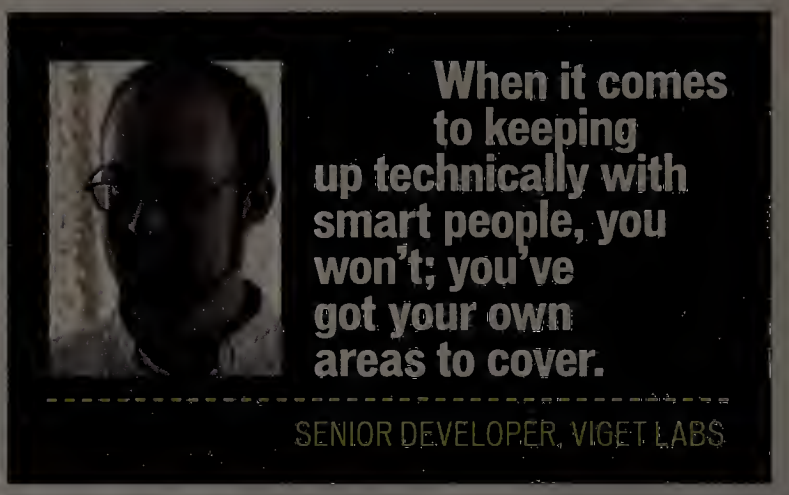
It's perfectly reasonable for bosses to tell you what to do, Nixon says, but when it comes to how the work gets done, a controlling atmosphere can be frustrating. He recalls working on a Web shopping cart that needed new shipping options. Because the software wasn't very extensible, Nixon suggested rewriting the code, which he estimates would have taken two weeks. "Dealing with all the special cases in the current code would have taken at least a week, so investing another week made sense to have something more maintainable afterwards," he says.

Nixon was overruled. But because of all the bugs already in the software and others that were introduced because of the new variable, it took three weeks to finish the new feature. "We

could have rewritten it in less time," Nixon says.

"You can't take people who have a passion for something and then start to build walls around them," says Jack Hughes, CEO of TopCoder Inc., a Glastonbury, Conn.-based company that stages coding competitions. A staff made up of those types of people does need structure, but that structure should be geared more around results than process, he says.

"You should format things in terms of the results you're looking for rather than proscribing the way in which they need to get those results," Hughes says.



DO TAKE A SOCRATIC APPROACH.

Extremely smart people rarely want to feel managed, but that doesn't mean they don't need to be, says Paul Glen, founder of the GeekLeaders.com Web community and a *Computerworld* columnist. To pull off this sleight of hand, he says, ask questions that will lead these employees to see your point of view. "If they don't want things dictated to them, you might have to manage them in a more Socratic form," he says.

This takes time and patience, especially when you think you already know the decision that ultimately needs to be made, says Edward Martinez, CIO at the H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute in Tampa, Fla., who has several Ph.D.s on staff.

"You have to vet their ideas and let them come back with a recommendation that you reject or agree with," he says. "Even though you want to just make the decision, you need to give them an opportunity to be part of it."

DO BE OPEN TO LEARNING NEW THINGS.

It would be wasteful not to let some of the ideas of a highly intelligent staff become reality. That's why Patrick Reagan, development director at Viget Labs, is open to exploring where experimentation may lead.

For instance, until two and a half years ago, the company had never done automated testing, but then a developer promoted the idea and things took off. "It's ingrained in our culture now," Reagan says. The company also moved from PHP for Web development to Ruby on Rails in 2006 through the encouragement of a smart developer.

Moreover, if you're open to the ideas that emanate from brilliant staffers, you can learn a lot yourself, Nixon says. "When it comes to keeping up technically with smart people, you won't; you've got your own areas to cover," he says. "You can learn from them, though, and you should."

Nixon says managing someone who was a "razor-sharp genius" helped him become good at database design. "I listened to him and learned from him," he recalls.

"You have to be willing to be bested," Glen notes. However, be sure to make your star staffers justify their positions in a way that's reasoned and convincing. "You can't abdicate your managerial responsibilities," he says.

DON'T PRETEND TO KNOW MORE THAN YOU DO.

The worst response to recognizing that a direct report is smarter than you is to feel insecure and threatened, Glen says. "Some bosses feel compelled to make decisions about things that they're completely unqualified to make, so everyone ends up in total misery over it," he says.

It's better to accept that your role isn't to be the one with the best ideas, but rather to be the one who can determine which ideas are best, Glen says.

In fact, taking action on ideas is where you earn the respect of the highly intelligent, Martinez says. "Even if people aren't happy, they'll respect that you're standing behind your decision," he says. "Really intelligent people want to see action and results, however it gets done."

Tim Robbins, a developer who participates in coding competitions through TopCoder and manages other developers at a financial firm, says he backs off when a staff member clearly knows more than he does about a particular topic. "I might make suggestions based on my experience, but I expect him to take the lead," he says.

"I think it's important for every technical manager to realize he or she is a guide, not a chief," Nixon notes, comparing the endeavor to an expedition into the western U.S. in the early 1800s. "You may lead the expedition, in that you know where you want to end up, but you've got to trust your hunter to hunt and your coachman to take care of the horses."

DO FIND WAYS TO STRETCH THEM.

Mundanity is the bane of highly intelligent staffers, who like to be challenged — sometimes to a fault. "The tendency is to go for the shiny new thing and prioritize that over billable work," Reagan says. To offset that, at Moffitt, staffers can volunteer to join a special ideas team, which meets bimonthly to explore major concerns or opportunities. This helps maintain momentum during slow periods, Martinez says. "If they see us move on one or two ideas, it really helps morale," he says.

Be careful not to underuse smart people, Martinez adds. One of his staffers was constantly bringing new ideas to the table, so he finally moved her into a position as director of special projects, where she could be a jack of all trades. "If I kept her in a standard role as an analyst, I wouldn't get a third of the stuff I'm getting from her now," Martinez says.

DON'T BE BLINDED BY BRILLIANCE.

Just because a person is smart doesn't mean she should run the show. Staying out of the way of smart people doesn't mean abdicating managerial authority, Martinez says. Instead, balance when to give them room to run with their own ideas, when to monitor them and when to intervene. After all, there are

Continued on page 26

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Dealing With A Dunce Boss

that new position, and within the first couple of weeks on the job, it all becomes clear: Your boss is an idiot. Now what?

According to John Hoover, an executive coach and author of *How to Work for an Idiot* (Career Press, 2003), this isn't a bad situation at all; in fact, it's an opportunity. "Most people just want to go to lunch and complain about it," he says. "But no one ever enhanced his or her career by making the boss look stupid, as much fun as that is."

Instead of trying to take power from someone higher up the food chain, Hoover says, concentrate on helping the boss appear less incompetent. Your goal should be to get yourself noticed so that you acquire the influence you need to get promoted and undo the damage the boss has done, he says.

SPEAK THE LANGUAGE

So, just how do you do that? First, learn idiotspeak, Hoover says. You do this by studying your boss – the pictures and artifacts in his office, what he values, the actions he takes. Understanding him enables you to start speaking his language, thus making him feel comfortable with you. It also helps you better anticipate the boss's behavior, Hoover says, and you may even be able to affect his agenda.

Studying your boss closely can be enlightening, Hoover adds. "You may realize he's not passive-aggressive at all, for instance, and that he's simply being asked to do things he's not competent to do," he says. If you can fill in the gaps in the boss's competence, you become the company's go-to person, he says.

Hoover admits that some would call this "kissing up to the boss." But don't be deterred by that kind of schoolyard logic, he says. In fact, it's time to recognize your own "inner idiot," he says. That's the one who raises its head and says, "Dig in and fight! You can reign victorious."

No one ever wins that kind of power struggle, Hoover warns, adding that he has had a few struggles with his own inner idiot that have cost him career opportunities.

IT pros in particular would do well to step out of the adversarial role of smart employee vs. dumb boss and into a more empathetic one, Hoover says.

"What really brilliant code warriors demand is recognition," he says, especially for being "right." But the best way to get recognition is to "get into that place where other people are comfortable with them."

Paul Glen, founder of the GeekLeaders.com Web community, says it's important to walk a mile in your boss's shoes and understand that there are different types and levels of intelligence. "I think almost everyone assumes they have a dumb boss," but it's often based on an incorrect understanding of what the boss's job is, Glen says. "The boss's job is not just to look down but out, sideways and into the future. These skills are often not valued by subordinates."

THE BROAD VIEW

Taking that broader view frees you from the frustration of feeling that you're right in a world of people who are wrong, says Sergey Kalinichenko, a frequent winner of TopCoder competitions. When he first began coding, he found himself at odds with the people who interacted with the systems he was building. But once Kalinichenko realized they cared about things like the system's functionality and not about maintainability, as he did, it became much easier to deal with them.

"At first I thought, 'How can they work for a technology company with very smart engineers and not speak their language?' " Kalinichenko says. "But then I realized they shouldn't even be attempting to speak my language, and I started to understand where they were coming from."

Another strategy, according to Tim Robbins, a TopCoder competitor, is to choose your battles wisely. "If you argue every point, the relationship will be rocky," he says. But if you give the boss the benefit of the doubt when you can, you build up enough respect to disagree when you really feel it's worth it. "You'll have more political power to push through what you want," he says.

– MARY BRANDEL

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Continued from page 24

many types of intelligence. A brilliant coder, for instance, may not always see big-picture strategy.

Another common mistake is deferring on every decision to the ultrasmart person in the group. Glen compares that to asking movie stars for their opinions on political issues. "To assume that someone is smart in every endeavor of life is akin to setting them up for failure," he says.

DO MAINTAIN YOUR HUMILITY.

As a technical manager, you will inevitably work with people smarter than you. "If not, you're doing a terrible job of hiring," says Nixon, who has been a manager for two and a half of his 10 years in development.

Given that, try to start each day with a sense of humility. "You're lucky to have your team, and they are going to take you to your destination; you're not taking them there," he says.

Try not to feel threatened by not being the smartest one in the room. "I've seen so many managers — especially those who came from the programming ranks — feel threatened by their team," Nixon says. "Feeling threatened by someone else being good at their job is poisonous." ■

Brandel *is a* Computerworld *contributing writer in Newton, Mass. Contact her at marybrandel@verizon.net.*

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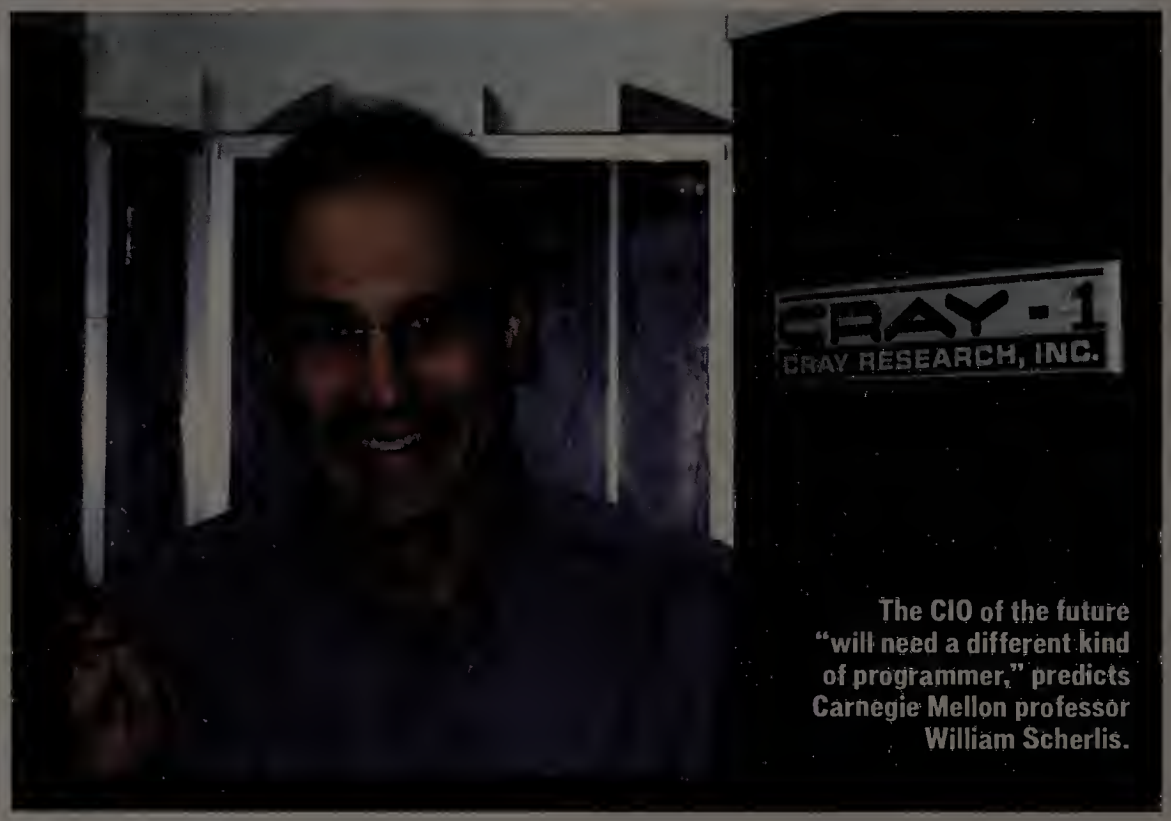
Automatic for The Programmer

Software isn't in a rut. In fact, its development has been so steady, we've come to expect continued progress (and therefore fail to appreciate it). **Welcome to the 'endless value spiral.'**



The CIO of the future "will need a different kind of programmer," predicts Carnegie Mellon professor William Scherlis.

William Scherlis *is a professor of computer science at Carnegie Mellon University and director of the Institute for Software Research there. He specializes in software assurance, software evolution and technology to support software teams. He has a long association with NASA and the U.S. Department of Defense. Scherlis spoke with* Computerworld's *Gary Anthes about progress in software development.*

The performance of hardware – be it microprocessors, storage systems or networks – has increased exponentially over the years. Why has progress in software been so slow? Sometimes people think we are at a plateau with software. But I'd like to refute that. It's making enormous strides, and on a pretty steady basis. It's been 50 years since John Backus, the inventor of Fortran, wrote his seminal paper on "automatic programming" to describe the translation from Fortran to machine code. Why "automatic programming"? Because at the time, Fortran seemed so highly descriptive and problem-oriented. Now the old Fortran seems very low-level and mechanistic. This same cycle has happened in the world of information systems and databases — remember the "automatic programming" promise of [fourth-generation programming languages]?

Fortran and 4GLs were enormous advancements, but with these kinds of advances, our ambitions correspondingly increase. So the commoditization and standardization never completely take over — the market drives us to create new value, and so we're improving tools, languages and processes at the top end just as quickly as we "routinize" and automate at the low end. The magic of software is that, because there are no limits of physics, we can keep advancing the technology to meet our ambitions. I call this the "endless value spiral."

What are some more recent advances? Object-oriented programming was a similar leap forward, and that is manifest in C++ and Java and C#. Object-oriented programming has allowed us to do things that previously we couldn't do, and one of the most important is building software frameworks — application servers, e-commerce frameworks like J2EE and .Net, and the ERP frameworks like SAP's NetWeaver. More recently, there has been a parallel development in an area called functional programming and a language at Microsoft called F#. They have built that into their .Net Framework.

There are also giant-scale programming models for high performance. Google and Yahoo both use the "Map-Reduce" model to handle parallel processing across multiterabyte data sets, rather than SQL, for example.

What's so important about those things for the future? The framework technologies allow the very clean separation of infrastructure provisioning from infrastructure usage. To a bank CIO, that means that it's possible to outsource the infrastructure and insource just exactly that

software development that differentiates the bank from some other bank. In the bad old days, you had to roll your own for the infrastructure as well.

A software framework like .Net or J2EE provides a rich array of services but also binds you to a particular architecture and control flow. If you are going to build a Web site to sell T-shirts, you can wholly appropriate large chunks of infrastructure and simply fill in the blanks to sell T-shirts. The work you need to do is very much lower than it used to be.

Are service-oriented architectures part of this future? SOA, construed in the broadest possible way, is really a vision of a future whereby we rethink the way we compose various services into overall capabilities. The vision is to "regularize" the taking of pieces and putting them together. The SOA idea is to construct a set of protocols — ways to transact — that support the very rich, flexible frameworks model. That flexibility is important because using these frameworks and ERP models is a little like having a spinal cord transplant. It's an enormous commitment. So SOA is appealing because it gives you a sense that you can plug and play. You can swap [application code] in and out relatively easily.

So with all this software reuse, will our bank CIO still need a programming staff? He'll always need a programming staff. That's one of the lessons of Backus' automatic programming. The moment you automate, you need to move on to the next level of value, because you are competing with your peers. But the CIO will need a different kind of programmer, one who can configure all the pieces and then write that little bit of code that does the special thing that differentiates the bank. The idea of the guy sitting alone in a cubicle writing code on a clean sheet of paper won't happen anymore. The model will be somebody who is broadly aware of a constant flow of new capabilities, assessing them, assessing risk and then putting everything together.

Do we need still more programming languages? We are constantly getting surprised by languages. Before Java showed up, everybody thought we were done. The community resists change because it seems to be very costly and risky to move to a new language. But, yes, I think we will continue to make leaps forward in languages, and the leaps will have to do with how easy it is to express powerful thoughts as programmers. Some of the leaps will come from the language itself, but others have to do with the tools and models that surround the language.

"The magic of software is that, because there are no limits of physics, we can keep advancing the technology to meet our ambitions. I call this the 'endless value spiral.'

What are some examples of these tools and models? Microsoft, for example, is at the forefront of something called deep program analysis. They are deploying it internally in a very aggressive way. They are tools that will analyze your code and tell you important things about it. In security, for example, it will say, "Here's a potential buffer overflow," or, "Here's where you are not checking for a null reference." These code analysis tools and models are often slowly brought into the language itself.

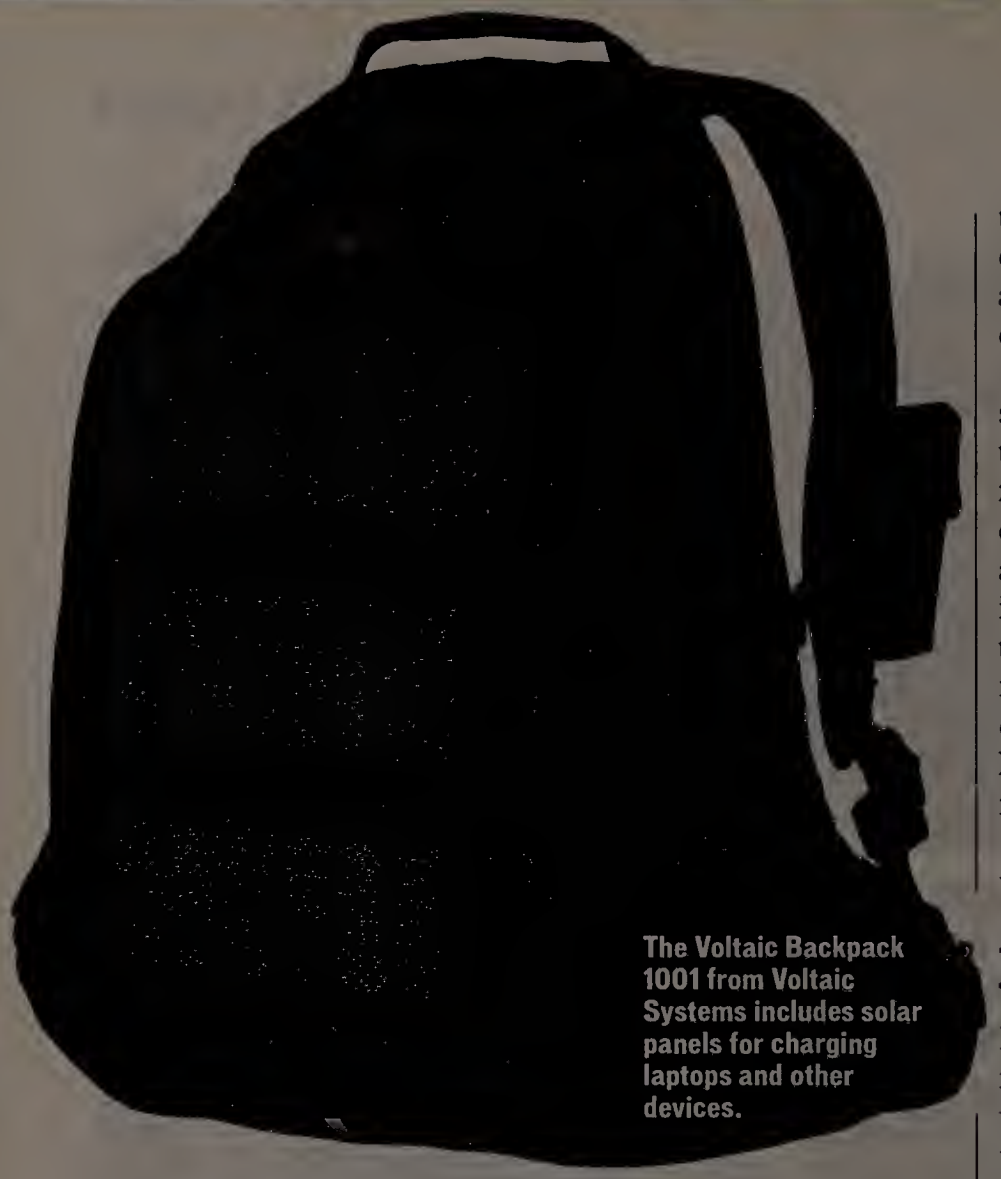
Are software developers ready to exploit the concurrent processing possible in multicore chips? I think it will be a lot of work to get where we need to be, partly because we have a culture of quality that's based on testing and [code] inspection. When you run in a concurrent environment, your tests are not repeatable, because you have intermittent problems. A problem might occur with a probability of one in a million, so if you run a test case, you have a very small chance of catching it. But if it runs every millisecond on every blade in your data center, the error might occur every few minutes.

A technology that I have been working on for some years is called analysis-based verification. Instead of running some code repeatedly, hoping you'll catch an error, you do a mathematical analysis that can tell you something about the full universe of all possible runs. That's been a dream for many years, and the challenge has been to make it scalable to big, messy programs and also to be usable by working developers. We have written software to do this and have tested it on commercial software at scale. It can say, "Here in your concurrent code is where a deadlock could occur," for example.

Are there other important trends under way in software? The whole outsourcing and globalization phenomenon is widely misunderstood. People think it's all about cost, and cost certainly was an initial driver. But it's turned into a story about agility, about access to expertise, and about the technological and business enablers.

It's also about organizational enablers. For example, there's Conway's Law, which says that a piece of software will reflect the organizational structure that produced it. My colleague [Carnegie Mellon computer science professor] Jim Herbsleb has taken that bit of folklore and turned it into a science of how you can align your software architecture with your organizational structure to minimize coordination across organizational interfaces. That's an amazingly cool thing.

Perhaps the biggest issue going forward is how to manage enterprise-scale architectural innovation. Across the industry, we've become really good at small team development. But the secret sauce at so many companies is the managed architectural innovation that frames the activity of the many small teams that operate seemingly independently. Amazon is a great example. ■



The Voltaic Backpack 1001 from Voltaic Systems includes solar panels for charging laptops and other devices.

■ MOBILE & WIRELESS

BECOMING A Green ROAD WARRIOR

Simple tweaks to your use of mobile technology can make a difference to Mother Earth.

By David Haskin

BUSINESS TRAVEL can be exhausting. Just getting to your flight in these days of traffic congestion and long security lines can be a trial. And once you're at your destination, there are meetings to attend and phone calls to return, not to mention the need to keep up with what's happening back at the office.

Who has time to think green under such circumstances? Andy Abramson does.

"I've been on the road for five days a week on average since the first of the year," says the CEO of Comunicano Inc., a Del Mar, Calif.-based marketing communications agency. "Before that, I was on the road three days a week. I'm a Bedouin, a global nomad, but I'm very conscious of being green."

The Travel Industry Association says that 26% of all travel in the U.S. in 2006 was for business. And air travel emits between 4% and 9% of all greenhouse gases, according to various estimates. Add to that the energy road warriors use for computing and communications, and they have an excellent opportunity to help the environment.

Here are 10 ways to make your business travels greener.

1. USE TECHNOLOGY TO STAY HOME.

Before you make arrangements to hit the road, ask yourself whether you need to travel at all. Many organizations with tight travel budgets have turned to technology to replace travel. Even an inveterate road warrior like Abramson is increasingly relying on such tools.

"We typically have planning sessions with clients that use audioconferencing so people don't all have to jump on planes," Abramson says. "And we use videoconferencing if we need to see each other. People can participate the same way they would if they're there. They're on the same page, not the same place."

Besides audio- and videoconferencing, webconferencing and even virtual trade shows can help keep you off the road.

2. BUY GREEN LAPTOPS.

Some laptops are greener than others. Before you buy, use EPEAT to find out how green a particular laptop is.

EPEAT, a program run by the Green Electronics Council, rates laptops and other types of computing hardware on a standardized series of 51 environmetal criteria, including the amount of electricity consumed and the disposability of products and components.

3. CONFIGURE YOUR MOBILE DEVICES CORRECTLY.

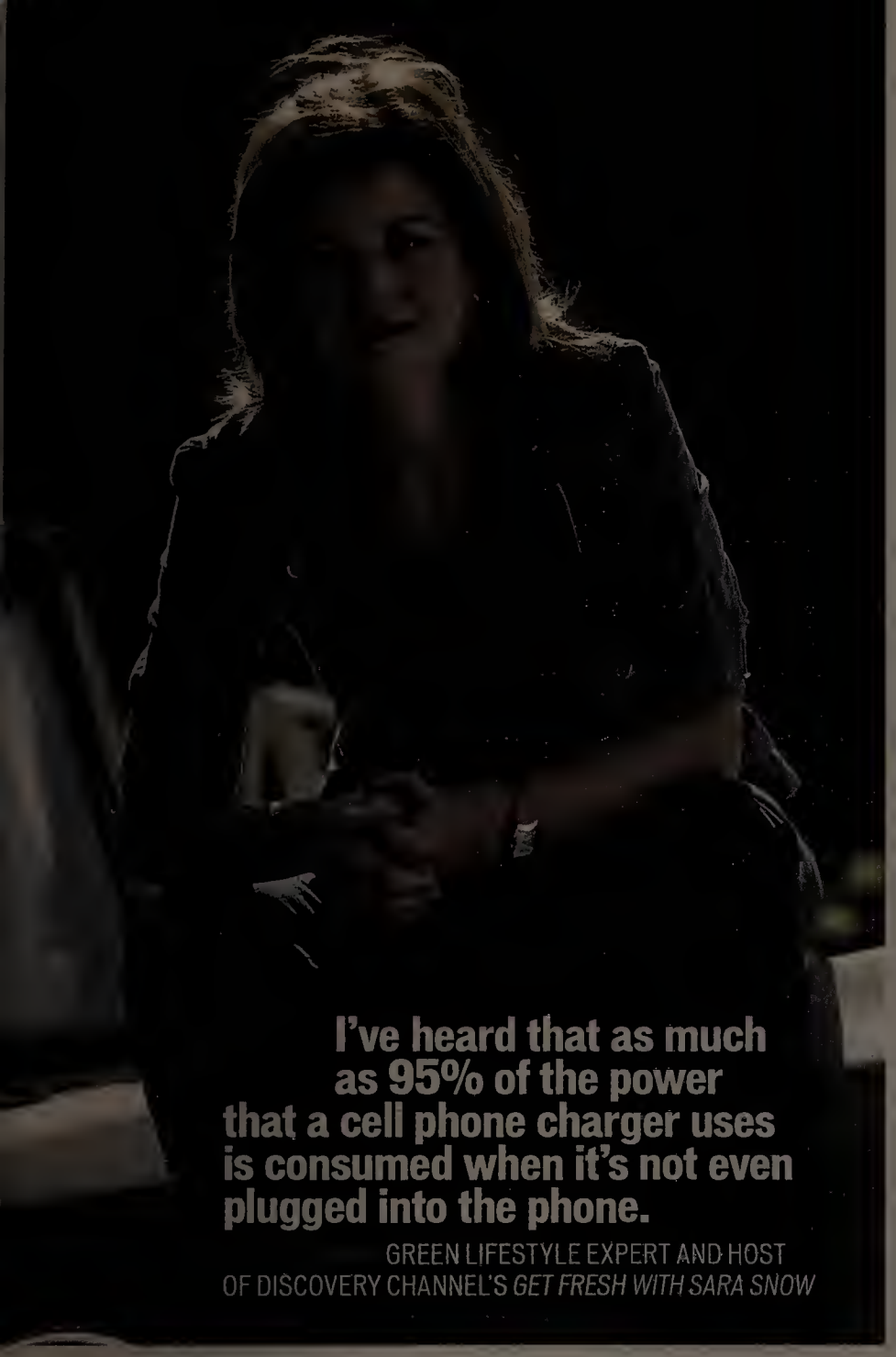
Michael Steiner, executive vice president at Ovation Travel Group Inc., which focuses on corporate travel,

The following tips aren't directly related to the computing and communications devices that you use while traveling, but they will help reduce your carbon footprint when you're on the road.

Patronizing an environmentally responsible hotel is a good way to green up your road warrior persona. Environmentally-friendlyhotels.com enables you to search by name or location for hotels in the U.S. and around the world. You can see how they rate on a scale that measures more than two-dozen criteria, including energy conservation, use of alternative energy sources, water use, recycling, and staff and guest education.

Mass transit, particularly rail transit, is available from many airports in larger cities. It is not only more energy efficient and less expensive than using a cab but, depending on the time of day, it can also be significantly faster. When you make your hotel reservation, ask if mass transit is available from the airport.

—DAVID HASKIN



I've heard that as much as 95% of the power that a cell phone charger uses is consumed when it's not even plugged into the phone.

GREEN LIFESTYLE EXPERT AND HOST OF DISCOVERY CHANNEL'S *GET FRESH WITH SARA SNOW*

notes that you can save a lot of energy by using the right settings on your mobile devices. "Configure your laptop to be as energy efficient as possible," Steiner says. For example, in Windows, you can set your laptop to automatically turn off the monitor after, say, 10 minutes of nonuse and to hibernate after an hour of nonuse. These settings are available in the Windows Control Panel; Apple laptops have similar options.

Steiner adds that cell phones and other small devices also have energy-saving options, such as tools that let users set the amount of time that passes before the screen goes blank.

4. TURN IT OFF.

Many of us leave our laptops on in hotel rooms so they can constantly receive e-mail. That, of course, wastes energy. If you'll be gone for a while, turn the laptop off.

5. UNPLUG WHEN NOT IN USE.

Better still, don't just turn your electronic gear off; unplug the devices from the wall. That's important because many devices that have been switched off still draw power. "It's called the 'phantom draw,' " says Sara Snow, a green lifestyle expert and host of Discovery Channel's *Get Fresh With Sara Snow* show. "Cell phone chargers are one of the biggest offenders," she adds. "I've heard that as much as 95% of the power that a cell phone charger uses is consumed when it's not even plugged into the phone."

Most people use power strips in their homes and offices. To avoid phantom draw, turn off all your devices, then flip off the switch on the power strip, she advises.

6. USE ALTERNATIVE POWER.

There are a surprising number of ways to charge your devices without plugging them into a wall socket.

"Some of our more forward-thinking clients are going to solar power and even windup power for [smaller] devices," Steiner says.

For example, Solio and Brunton Inc. offer device rechargers that use solar power. The Highgear SmartDynamo is a windup charger that features a cell phone port and contains a radio and flashlight. Voltaic Systems Inc., Eclipse Solar Gear and others sell laptop cases and backpacks with solar panels for charging laptops and other devices. "Those backpacks work surprisingly well," Snow says.

Another option is to buy a 75-watt universal adapter, which plugs into a car's cigarette lighter and can charge laptops and other devices. That's free power, since driving generates electricity. Such adapters are available from a host of vendors, including American Power Conversion Corp.

Abramson even uses a solar-powered Bluetooth headset from Iqua Ltd. "It literally recharges as I walk around. It really works well, and it works in any light," he says.

7. CONSOLIDATE.

Today, many mobile devices can perform multiple tasks. "Use a smart phone for your music instead of both a cell phone and an iPod," Abramson says. "It's consolidation without compromise."

8. DISPOSE RESPONSIBLY.

Eventually, the useful life of any electronic device comes to an end. Snow urges people to find a new owner if the device is still usable. If that's not the case, make sure you dispose of the old device carefully — electronic gear is full of potentially toxic substances.

Try to find a recycling center that takes electronics, Snow says. Such centers are becoming more common. The Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition offers a guide for recycling electronic gear and a list of recyclers nationwide that are committed to responsibly handling obsolete electronics.

9. USE LESS PAPER.

E-readers and e-documents use electricity, but they don't use paper, which requires a lot of energy to produce. Plus, e-docs are easier to carry on the road.

Typically, smart phones can display documents as PDFs. If you require access to a lot of e-documents, think of buying an e-reader like Amazon's Kindle or the Sony Reader, which can store hundreds of documents and have larger, more readable screens than smart phones do. True, this runs counter to the earlier tip to use fewer devices, but it could well yield a net energy gain.

10. THINK.

Without question, being green on the road takes a bit of effort and can require you to change your habits.

"If you're going to be green, the key is to think green," Abramson says. "Think about what you're doing and how you're getting somewhere." ■

Haskin *is a* Computerworld *contributing editor. Contact him at dhaskin@earthlink.net.*

You Have to Be Reasonable

Managing security is a matter of **balancing security priorities** with **business realities.**

IF YOU'RE an information security manager, you have to apply security smarts to your information security model — sensible security that's in line with your organization's business, applicable legislation and available resources.

I put my company's security somewhere between that of universities and the Pentagon. We're not a bank, health care organization, government contractor or e-commerce company. But we do have quite a bit of intellectual property and thousands of employees whose personal data needs to be protected. And, of course, since we're a publicly traded company, we must comply with Sarbanes-Oxley. All in all, I consider myself reasonable when it comes to enforcing security. I don't want to make it hard to do business, but if there's a breach, I am the one who will be called on the carpet.

Any particular day might find me debating, arguing and reasoning with various IT and business units on information security matters. A recent situation was fairly typical.

We use SAP for a variety of critical business processes, including financial reporting. I recently learned that the SAP team wanted to create some generic system accounts so that SAP's support technicians could have access to our financial systems for troubleshooting purposes. The term "generic system accounts" coupled with the phrase "access to our financial systems" didn't sit well with me. A mile-long string of e-mails between me and the SAP team ensued.

When our engineers run into a problem they can't fix, they log a trouble ticket with SAP's online support system. The SAP technician who is assigned then contacts one of our SAP engineers to gain access to our SAP infrastructure.

■ I put our security somewhere between universities and the Pentagon.

This works well between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., but not at 2 a.m.

So our SAP team wants to include in the trouble ticket a generic user ID and password. The problem is that these accounts would have full administrative privileges for our SAP financials. What's more, the user ID and password would be sent out as unencrypted plain text. And it's not within my scope to vouch for the integrity and business processes of SAP.

HORNS OF A DILEMMA

This was a predicament. If I denied the request, we might not be able to respond to all SAP problems in a timely manner. If I allowed it, there would be a risk that our financial data could be modified, which is a Sarbanes-Oxley issue.

In the spirit of being reasonable, I came up with a compromise. The generic accounts will have to be read-only. Sarbanes-Oxley controls require any changes to our financial systems to be approved by a manager, and I figured that there was no reason for an SAP technician to make a change to our environment without first consulting with our managers, no matter what the time of night. I also reasoned that any issue that was sufficiently critical to warrant a change would also warrant our on-call engineers going to the office or logging on remotely to handle the situation.

I'm not entirely satisfied with this compromise. However, it will serve while I ask the SAP team to look into a tool from SAP called Virsa Firefighter. It allows IT administrators to perform emergency activities outside their roles under a controlled and auditable environment. With Firefighter, we could control and assign a temporary ID and track and monitor activity by logging every keystroke the user typed.

The existence of this tool tells me that the folks at SAP see the same potential for problems in these situations that I do. ■

This week's journal is written by a real security manager, **"Mathias Thurman,"** *whose name and employer have been disguised for obvious reasons. Contact him at mathias_thurman@yahoo.com.*

Trouble Ticket

ISSUE: The SAP team wants to give outside technicians access to the company's financial systems.

ACTION PLAN: Take the business concerns into consideration in crafting a compromise.

JOIN IN
To join in the discussions about security, go to **computerworld.com/blogs/security**

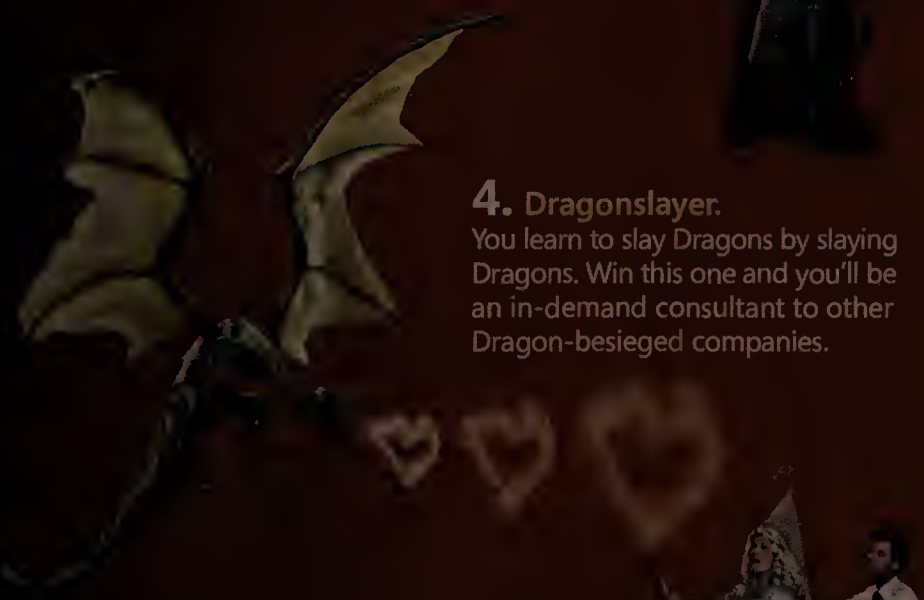
Microsoft

taking on dragons. easy.

1. Put the fire out.
Knowing what to do if there's a fire is always smart. That the fire spews from the mouth of a ferocious flying serpent should make no difference.

2. Ask for a break.
Searing heat, slashing claws, and the beating wings of hell will tire anyone. Say you need a break, then just walk quickly out the back.

3. Use the shrink spell.
Arthurian legend tells of the wizard Merlin, who would have known how to shrink an unruly Dragon. Magic wand and spells not included.



4. Dragonslayer.
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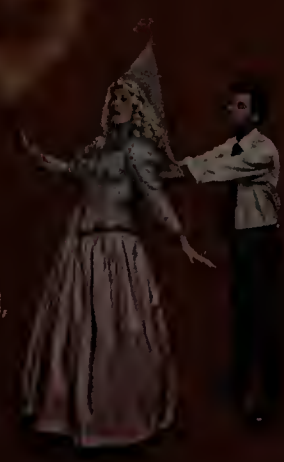

5. The princess defense.
That temp in finance—bewigged, begowned, and pushed Dragonward—may just pass for a princess.

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■ OPINION

Naomi Karten

Managing the Mess of Change

WHEN I give presentations on managing change, managers often ask how to implement change without all that messy people stuff. They don't actually say "messy people stuff," but that's what they mean. These managers don't want to have to deal with the resistance and objections and pushback and grousing and grumbling that so often accompany change efforts. And who can blame them? Who needs all that turbulence?

The reality, however, is that turbulence is a fundamental part of the change experience. Replace what's familiar and predictable with that which is unfamiliar, confusing, ambiguous or potentially risky, and people react. You can't eliminate the turbulence. But you can minimize the duration and intensity of the turbulence, and thereby implement the change more smoothly and with less gnashing of teeth.

The key to managing the messiness is to understand — and really get — how people experience change and to communicate with them in accordance with that understanding.

Almost any change (and sometimes even just the rumor of a change) upsets the relative equilibrium of whatever came before. When I ask IT professionals what recent changes they've faced, they overflow with examples: a reorganization, then another and another. A project cancellation. New technology or even "just" an upgrade. A new methodology. An abrupt priority change. A new CEO. A departing co-project manager. A move to another town (or to the other side of the floor). A rumored layoff. A promotion. And on and on.

With all these changes, people's reactions are often more emotional and visceral than logical and rational. Some people display shock, anxiety, fear or anger. Some become preoccupied, absent-minded, forgetful, distracted or fatigued — even if they view the change as positive.

■ The reality is that turbulence is a fundamental part of the change experience.

These reactions are both normal and predictable. And what people need most in order to cope is communication in the form of information, empathy, reassurance and feedback. What, when and how you communicate with those affected by change can decrease the duration and intensity of the turbulence. Here are some examples:

■ **Let employees know** about an upcoming change before it happens. Don't hold back in the misguided belief that you're doing them a favor.

■ **Regularly update people** about the status of the change. And if you don't know the status, let them know that, too — regularly — or they'll suspect you're holding out on them.

■ **Anticipate some pushback** as staffers come to terms with the change. Recognize this reaction as normal, and seek to understand their concerns.

■ **Show respect for the old way.** Change represents loss; don't trivialize the past.

■ **Acknowledge the turmoil** workers are experiencing, and empathize with their concerns.

■ **Support them.** When there is a dip in productivity — which is almost inevitable during major change — be as supportive as you can.

■ **Educate people** about the experience of change, so they understand that their reactions are a normal part of the adjustment process.

■ **Most important, build trust in advance** of a change so that those affected will be open to your ideas and advice. Otherwise, none of the above will work.

This is not to say that you should ceaselessly pamper people and give them all the time in the world to adjust. You still have deadlines to meet and commitments to fulfill. But by understanding the experience of change, you can more effectively tame the turbulence and minimize the messiness. ■

Naomi Karten (www.nkarten.com*) is the author of several books and e-books, including* Changing How You Communicate During Change. *Her presentations and seminars help organizations improve customer satisfaction, manage change and strengthen teamwork. Contact her at naomi@nkarten.com.*

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Career Watch

Hanging In There

The Conference Board reports that job postings declined sharply in April, down 16.4% from a year earlier. But the "computer and mathematical" category was among those still showing buoyancy. Ranked No. 3 overall, behind health care and management, the computer and mathematical category saw over 180,000 jobs posted last month.

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Average hourly wage for the "computer and mathematical" job category, as reported by The Conference Board, using U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics figures

■ Q&A

Dave Opton

The CEO and founder of executive job search and recruiting network **ExecuNet** talks about the employment outlook.

With payrolls shrinking and unemployment rising, it seems like a very tough market for IT workers. Do things look as bleak at the executive level? Not at all. In fact, our 2008 Executive Job Market Intelligence Report, which was just released, indicates that demand for IT executives continues to grow at a reasonable pace despite increasing economic uncertainty. Two factors contributing to this growth are a shortage of talent and sustained economic growth overseas, which is helping improve the balance sheets of many U.S.-based companies with a global presence.

While this job growth may not be as robust as it was two years ago, companies are still recruiting executive IT talent. To take full advantage of this job growth, you need to rely less on your laptop and more on your personal and professional network, as most job openings at the executive level never see the light of day on a company Web site or job board.

Speaking of networking, much has been written about the growth of online social and business networking sites in the past year. Are these resources helping IT professionals advance their careers? The growth of these sites during the past year has been staggering. Many of the larger, well-known online networking services now have upwards of 20 million members, but when it comes to weighing their value, CIOs and IT professionals shouldn't confuse quantity with quality.

Networking is not a numbers game. And trust, a critical element to any productive relationship, isn't easily traded among executives in large, open networks. Based upon the feedback we've received from decision-makers in IT and other professions, niche networks that facilitate the exchange of information and insight between members are proving to be more valuable for identifying target contacts.

What other factors are contributing to the general mood of IT professionals? We hear from a lot of CIOs who want to work for an organization that is on the leading – not bleeding – edge of technology. Not only do these companies present a great range of opportunities and resources, they are also much more likely to value the insights and expertise of the CIO. Unfortunately, these companies are not as prevalent as they should be, as CIOs across a wide range of industries are still fighting for the proverbial seat at the table.

– JAMIE ECKLE

PAGE COMPILED BY JAMIE ECKLE.

Let's Get This Done, People – It Will Be Wednesday Before We Know It

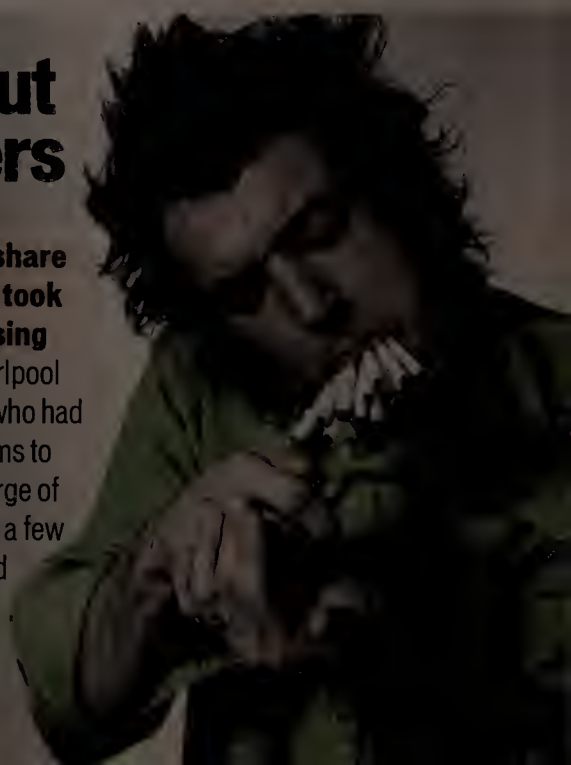
Which day is the most productive of the week?

SOURCE: ACCOUNTEMPS SURVEYS OF 150 SENIOR EXECUTIVES, FEBRUARY 2002 AND 2008

	2002	2008
Monday	26%	12%
Tuesday	48%	57%
Wednesday	9%	11%
Thursday	5%	11%
Friday	1%	3%
Don't know	11%	6%

Smoking Out The Smokers

The trend toward making smokers carry a heavier share of the health care burden took two interesting and opposing turns recently. In April, Whirlpool Corp. suspended 39 workers who had lied on benefits enrollment forms to avoid paying an annual surcharge of $500 for tobacco use. But just a few days later, Tribune Co. reversed itself and dropped a recently instituted smoker penalty of $100 per month.



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Shark Tank

TRUE TALES OF IT LIFE AS TOLD TO SHARKY

A-OK on the BOC

This small retailer's computer room has six servers running off a single UPS. And that's fine – until one afternoon when a squirrel meets a transformer nearby. Zap. Sizzle. Dark computer room. "The entire IT department, all four of us, high-tailed it into the computer room and came up with a battle plan," says a pilot fish on the scene. "We would run one of those 100-foot, heavy-duty orange extension cords to the one working outlet within reach." Halfway through the process of moving the servers to the new power source, a user pokes her head in and asks if she can keep working during the blackout. "Of course," answers the IT VP. "We're up on the BOC!" As the user heads back down the hallway loudly telling the other users to keep working because the BOC network is up and running, fish and her cohorts have to shut the computer room door and stifle their laughter. Says fish, "We couldn't let her know that *BOC* was an acronym for 'big orange cord.' "

Priorities

Database admin pilot fish is on call and sleeping soundly when his beeper goes off at 1 a.m. "I returned the call," says fish, "and the user said that a job on his server was stuck and he wasn't getting new rows into a table." Fish logs on, confirms the problem and fixes it with a single mouse click. But he also notices that the job has been stuck since 10:30 a.m. two days before. "Yeah, it's been annoying," user explains. "The stuck job has been paging me to tell me there's a problem every 15 minutes." Every 15 minutes for two straight days? fish asks. "No," says user. "Late yesterday, I turned my pager off so it wouldn't bother me." Then why are you beeping me now at 1 a.m.? "Well, it didn't really seem important to me until now."

Biker Attitude

Fresh-out-of-college pilot fish gets his first assignment for his new job: on-site service at a Harley-Davidson dealership out in the sticks. "Apparently, the cash register was not opening when sales were made, and they were unable to give change to customers," says fish. "When I arrived, I was confronted by a very large gentleman who pleasantly walked me to the affected register and computer, reached under the counter, pulled out what I believe was a Colt .45 pistol, pointed it at the computer and told me I had two minutes to get the register open or he was going to shoot the computer. I believed him. I have never successfully debugged a program so fast in my life. I lived, the computer lived – and I still had to pay $15 for a shirt before I left."

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Page number refers to page on which story begins. Company names can also be searched at computerworld.com

Aberdeen Group Inc. 4
Accountemps 36
AdminServer Inc. 8
Advanced Micro Devices Inc. 4, 6, 8
Amazon.com Inc. 29, 31
American Power Conversion Corp. 4, 31
Anti-Defamation League 17
AT&T Inc. 10
BMC Software Inc. 4
British Educational Communications and Technology Agency 10
Brunton Inc. 31
Bureau of Labor Statistics 36
CA Inc. 4
CareGroup Healthcare System 19
Carnegie Mellon University 28
Center for American Politics and Citizenship 14
Cisco Systems Inc. 4
Computer Sciences Corp. 10
Comunicano Inc. 30
Concur Technologies Inc. 4
Dave & Buster's Inc. 8
Dell Inc. 4
Developer Express Inc. 10
Discovery Channel 31
Dollar Thrifty Automotive Group Inc. 11
EarthLink Inc. 10
Eclipse Solar Gear 31
Election Technology Council 14
Electronic Data Systems Corp. 4, 6, 11
Electronic Privacy Information Center 14
Eli Lilly and Co. 8
EMC Corp. 4, 6
Environmentallyfriendlyhotels.com 30
Evans Data Corp. 10
ExecuNet Inc. 36
Fayerwayer.com 10
Forrester Research Inc. 6, 8
FrontRange Solutions USA Inc. 4
Gartner Inc. 11
GeekLeaders.com 24, 26
Google Inc. 4, 16, 28
Green Electronics Council 30
H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute 24
Harley-Davidson Inc. 38
Harvard Medical School 19
Healthcare Information Technology Standards Panel 19
Hewlett-Packard Co. 4, 6, 10, 11
Hitachi Ltd. 4
IBM 4, 6, 10, 11
IDC 6
Infor Global Solutions Inc. 4
InfoSentry Services Inc. 12
Institute for Software Research 28
International DB2 Users Group 6
Iqua Ltd. 31
Johns Hopkins University 14
Kirix Corp. 16
Kronos Inc. 4
Lloyds TSB Group PLC 10
Logility Inc. 4
Los Alamos National Laboratory 6
Microsoft Corp. 4, 8, 10, 28
MIT 6
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New England Health Electronic Data Interchange Network 19
New York Public Library 17
North Carolina State Board of Elections 12
Novell Inc. 4
Oklahoma State University 8
Oracle Corp. 4, 8
Ovation Travel Group Inc. 30
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Salesforce.com Inc. 4
SAP AG 4, 28, 32
Sequoia Voting Systems Inc. 14
Servigistics Inc. 4
Silicon Graphics Inc. 4
Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition 31
Solio 31
Sony Corp. 6, 31
Sun Microsystems Inc. 4, 10
Sybase Inc. 4
Symantec Corp. 4
Teradata Corp. 4
The Brookings Institution 12
The Conference Board Inc. 36
TopCoder Inc. 8, 24, 26
Toshiba Corp. 4, 6
Travel Industry Association 30
Tribune Co. 36
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U.S. Department of Energy 6
U.S. Department of Justice 8
U.S. Secret Service 8
U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission 6
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Unisys Corp. 4
Unite the Union 10
VerifiedVoting.org 14
Viget Labs LLC 22
Whirlpool Corp. 36
Yahoo Inc. 8, 28

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Framingham, MA 01701-9171
(508) 879-0700
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President/Publisher/CEO
Matthew J. Sweeney
(508) 271-7100

Executive Assistant to the President/Publisher/CEO
Diana Cooper
(508) 820-8522

Vice President/ General Manager Online
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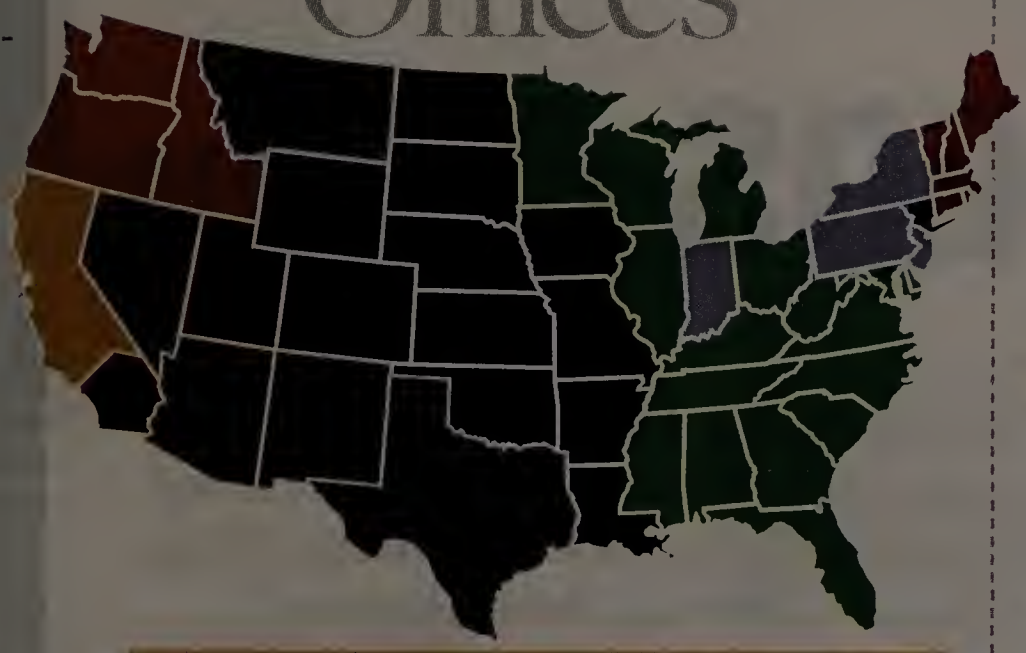

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■ FRANKLY SPEAKING

Frank Hayes

HP+EDS & You

HOW MANY heads will roll at EDS? That's the obvious question, now that Hewlett-Packard is buying the company. A back-of-the-envelope calculation says that at least half the employees of HP+EDS are in services, but they generate only one-third of the revenue. Conclusion: Up to 50% of them will get the chop.

Yeah, it's the obvious question — but the wrong one for IT.

You can safely figure that HP CEO Mark Hurd will do his usual slashing at EDS. That'll be tough for the 20,000 or 40,000 or 60,000 EDSers who lose their jobs.

But for corporate IT, unless you want to snap up some of that newly liberated EDS talent, that's irrelevant. The big question is how HP+EDS will make your job tougher.

Figuring that out isn't as much fun as bewailing the lost jobs or speculating about how long it will take Hurd to integrate the two companies (remember Compaq?). But whether you'll still be able to get the same products and services — and whether they'll cost you more — are the issues that matter.

Some of the dots are easy to connect. If you're a corporate EDS customer, expect your IT services to be provided from the other side of the globe. EDS was already in the process of shifting as many as two-thirds of its jobs offshore. With the HP buyout, that's going to accelerate.

The one quarter of EDSers who currently work on U.S. government accounts will stay in this country, along with a little project-management glue and salespeople. But that'll be it.

That won't be enough to reduce the head count by tens of thousands, though. For that, HP+EDS will need to automate its data center management business — in a big way.

Data center automation can be a wonderful thing, especially if it's tuned to meet your business needs — getting rid of dreary, routine IT scut work and freeing up staffers to be more responsive to business users.

■ The priority will be to cut HP+EDS's costs – not improve your business's performance.

But when HP+EDS automates your data center, the priority will be to cut HP+EDS's costs, not improve your company's performance.

So if EDS runs your data center, and HP+EDS heavily automates it, will you still get the responsiveness you need? Maybe. It's certainly an issue worth revisiting at contract renewal time.

Will EDS suddenly become a sales arm of HP? Probably not. EDS works in big, multivendor data centers where HP can't offer every product that's needed. Vendor-agnostic services will remain a virtue by necessity, even if that means EDS is moving hardware from HP's biggest competitor.

What about EDS's custom application development business? Consider this: It can't be heavily automated. It has a long history of failed projects. It's oriented to building huge, monolithic systems in an era when packaged applications and agile development are the way everything is going. That's not a business line you can count on HP to expand.

Here's one more thing for EDS customers to think about: EDS has spent recent years culling its "underperforming" customers — the less-profitable, more-demanding ones. That's a reasonable business practice. But with new pressure to cut costs and boost revenues, HP+EDS is pretty certain to raise the bar for what qualifies as a good customer.

So drive the hardest bargains you can. Make sure you get the service quality and responsiveness you need. But remember: In the midst of big layoffs, forced automation and increased offshoring, EDS employees aren't the only ones facing the chop.

The next one to get it could be you. ■

Frank Hayes *is* Computerworld*'s senior news columnist. Contact him at frank_hayes@computerworld.com.*

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